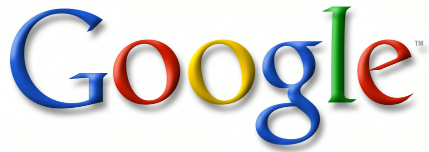

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A HOLIDAY IN GAOL

FREDERICK MARTYN

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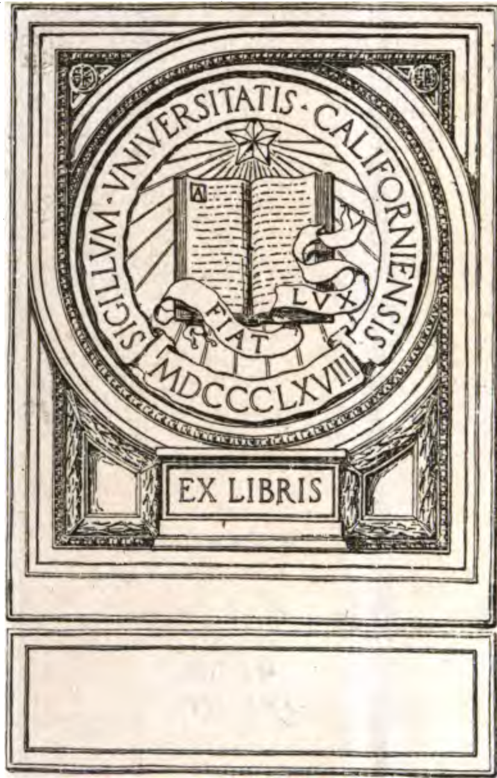
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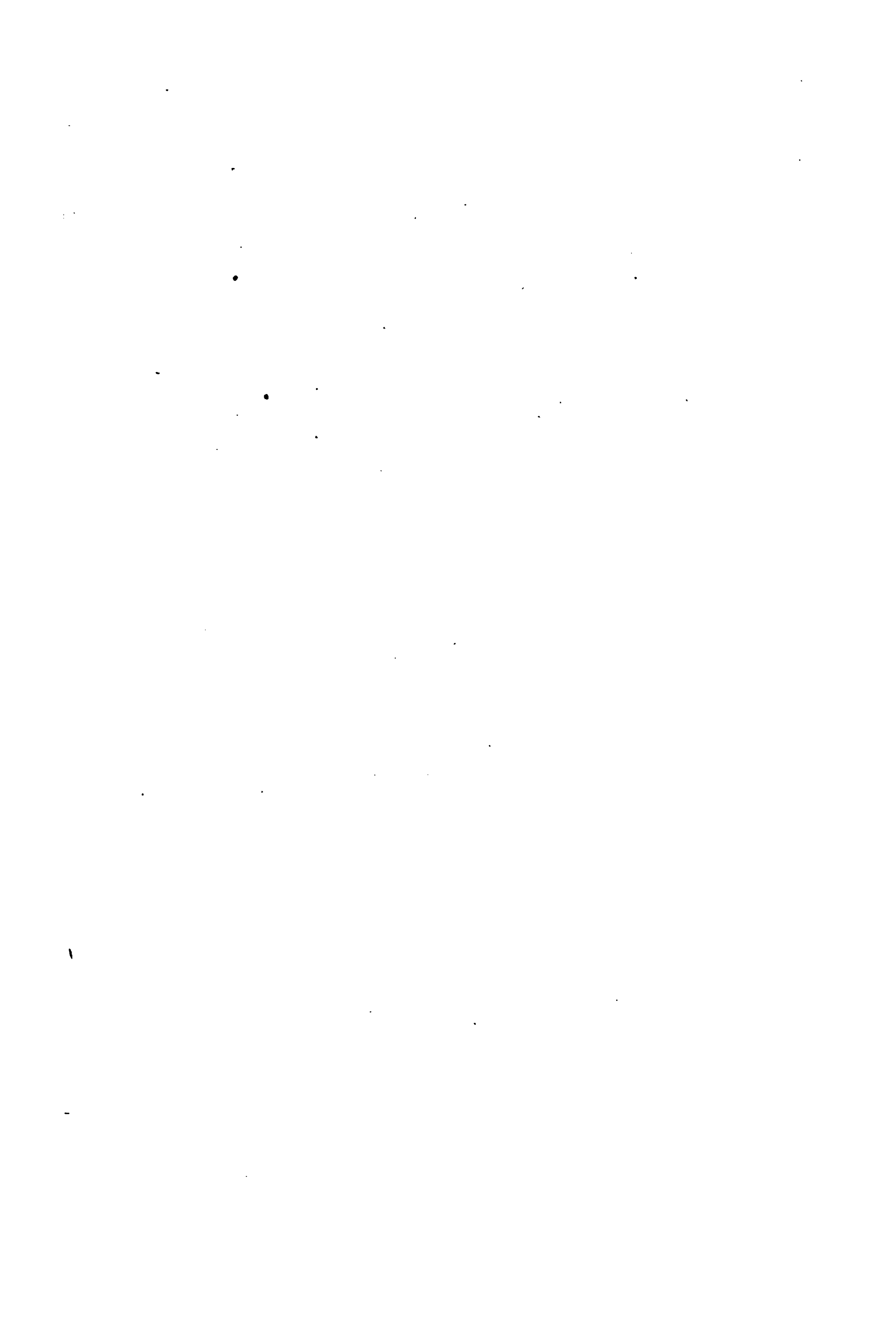

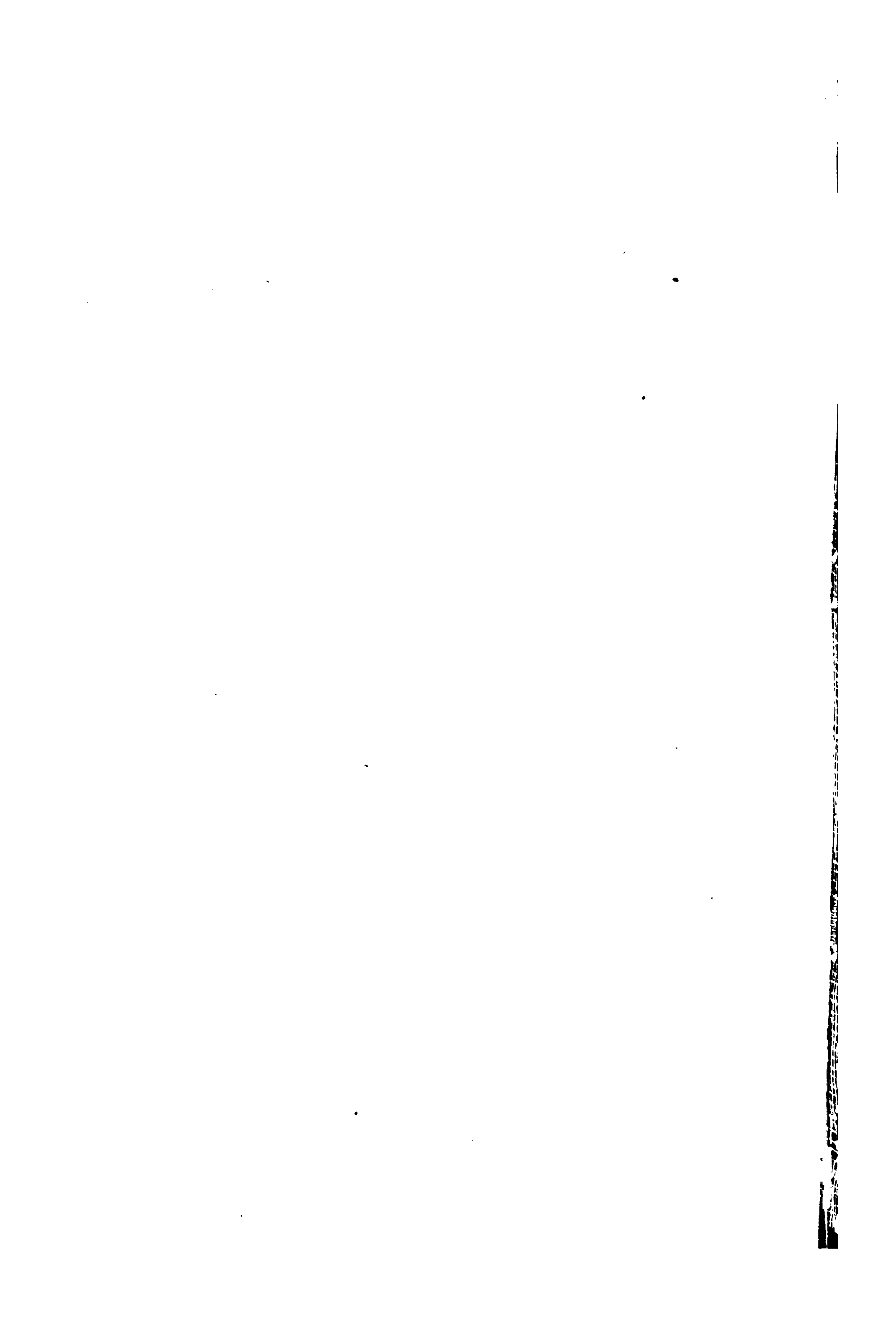

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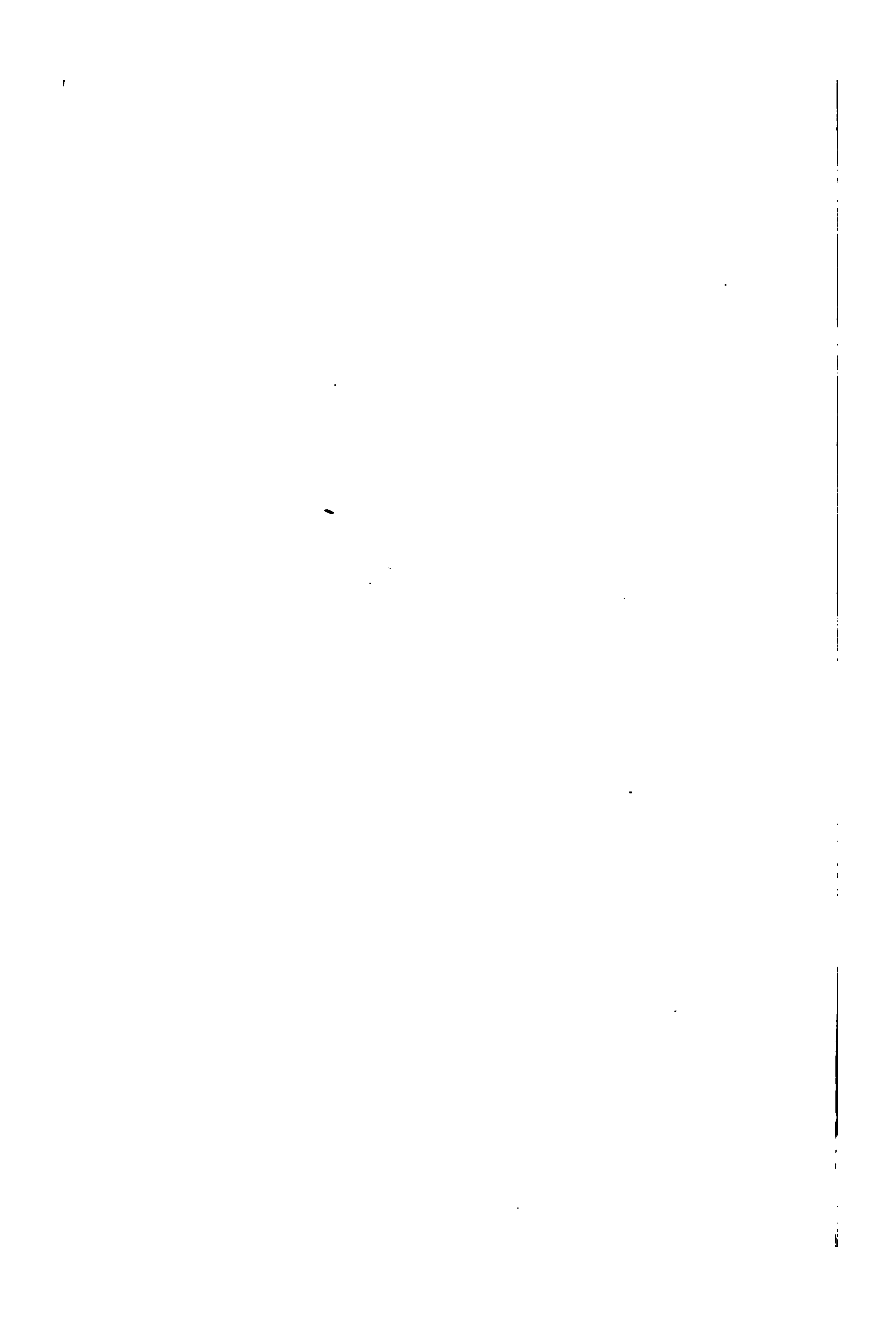

A HOLIDAY IN GAOL

BY

FREDERIC MARTYN

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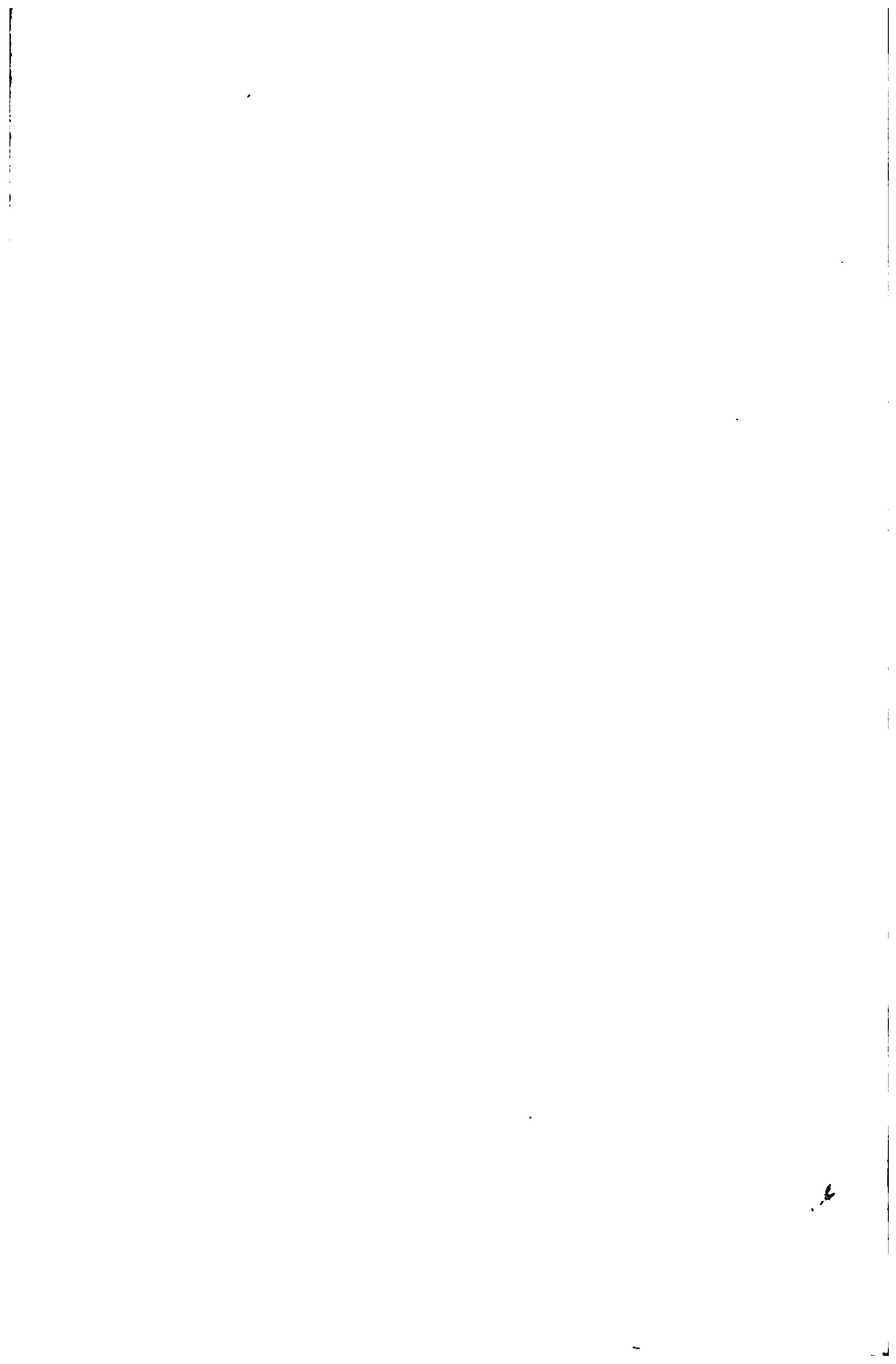

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

A HOLIDAY IN GAOL

CHAPTER I

THE ARREST

I HAVE recently returned to work from the holiday of a lifetime, feeling as if I am wound up to go another fifty years on top of the half-century I already have to own to, and with a capacity for enjoyment that I don't remember to have possessed in my salad days. I have been taking the finest rest cure that the whole world affords: I have been doing eighteen months' hard labour in an English prison.

No, I am not trying to pull the leg of a credulous public; I am simply endeavouring to put into readable shape my experiences of police, prisons, and prisoners arising out of my first and only conflict with the criminal law of this or any other country.

I am afraid that my experiences will be found to differ greatly from any that have yet appeared

either in the newspapers or in book form. If they were not altogether different there would be no excuse for publishing them, inasmuch as the public must be quite "fed up" with the whining accounts of prison life that have been appearing more or less continuously in the penny weeklies for the past few years.

These woeful wails without exception represent prison life as a very good imitation of purgatory, but I say boldly that it is nothing of the sort, and that, putting deprivation of liberty out of consideration, nine men out of every ten who go to prison are better off there than they would be outside.

It may be put up against me that I was hardly in a position to judge of the rigour of the English penal system, seeing that I was a mere Hard Labour prisoner in a local prison while the accounts I have referred to were written by men who have undergone sentences of penal servitude. All I can say to this is that every old convict that I met in prison—and I met a good few, and asked every one of them the same question—declared with emphasis that hard labour isn't "in it" with penal servitude for food, comfort, and flight of time; and that three years' penal servitude was in every way

a more desirable sentence than two years' hard labour.

It may be thought, too, that my previous circumstances were such as to make the prison food and the prison bed a change for the better. This would be an extremely erroneous impression to get hold of, inasmuch as I went to prison straight from the smoking of shilling cigars and the eating of seven-and-sixpenny dinners, and living the life generally of a man who considers that the best of everything is good enough for him.

It is well known that it is quite possible for two eye-witnesses of an occurrence to give, in perfect sincerity and good faith, diametrically opposite accounts of what happened. What a man sees depends a great deal upon the point of view from which he looks at it, and this may be the explanation of the discrepancies between my experience and those of others. I am not accusing writers of previous accounts of life in prison of lying or misrepresentation; it may well be that their sufferings were as terrible as they make them out to be, and that I didn't suffer because I have the good fortune to be a sort of rhinoceros-hided animal who can't even be tickled with anything less formidable than a

particularly sharp and well-built pitchfork. I don't think myself that I am more thick-skinned than the ordinary man, but I must confess that I have a tendency to hunt for the silver lining to a cloud without worrying myself to death about the blackness of the cloud itself.

Whatever it was that caused me to look on my prison experiences in the way I did, it is a fact that I regard my eighteen months' enforced residence in gaol as one of the most comfortable incidents in a somewhat varied life; as a real holiday, in fact. I won't go so far as to say that I was sorry when the time came for me to return to the outside world again—for even holidays pall, and one longs for change from the pleasantest times—but I can honestly assert that I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and am glad that it came my way.

I didn't enjoy the beginning of it, not a little bit. It was a real "come down" for me to go to gaol, and in the early stages I really felt as if the sun had gone bang out of my sky and would never re-appear; but this pessimistic feeling soon wore off, and I began to look around me and appreciate the fact that many worse things might have happened to me.

My arrest came upon me as a crushing

surprise, for I was not conscious of having done anything that was anywhere near the borders of crime; and the surprise at the arrest itself was only one degree less intense than the surprise at the manner of it. The police may behave roughly when arresting some criminals, but they were very gentle with me, and arrested me as politely and as quietly as if they were merely inviting me to dinner.

As I came out of the post-office of the seaside town where I was staying, two well-dressed men who were standing on the other side of the street crossed over and met me in the centre of the carriage-way. One of them raised his hat and mentioned my name interrogatively.

"Yes," I replied.

Then the second man took up position at my side and the first one said deprecatingly—

"I'm sorry to say, sir, that I have a warrant for your arrest. Would you like to go in anywhere to talk the matter over?"

"Warrant for my arrest!" I ejaculated. "What on earth for?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders and smilingly rejoined—

"You don't want me to show it here do you?

Let us go in there;" and he nodded in the direction of a neighbouring hotel.

We made our way to the smoke-room, and seeing that the drinks "were up against me," as they say in America, I asked them what they would have.

"Scotch and soda?" said the first man, interrogatively, to his colleague.

The second man nodded and I ordered.

When the waiter had gone for the drinks, the first man suggested that I might like to smoke, adding apologetically—

"They won't let you smoke in there, you know."

I produced my cigar-case and handed it round.

The detective who had the speaking part lighted his at once without comment, but the other one put the cigar up to his ear, pinched it lovingly with his fingers, and then, with something like a sigh, wrapped it in an old letter and carefully pinned it in the crown of his hat.

"May as well smoke it," said the first detective; "we needn't go in for a good while yet."

The silent one shook his head.

"It's a sin to smoke a cigar like that on a week-day," he said; "I'll save it till Sunday afternoon."

I hastened to give him another cigar for present smoking, and detective number one remarked that good cigars didn't often get in the way of provincial detectives, and that number two ought to have joined the London force.

I gathered from this, rightly as it turned out, that number one was the man who had my case in hand, and that number two was merely a local man who had been called in to help.

We smoked, and talked on indifferent subjects, until we got the room to ourselves, and then I suggested that I was ready to hear particulars. I didn't think for a moment that I was in any danger of imprisonment, but I didn't feel comfortable nevertheless, for I knew that the scandal and exposure incidental to even an unfounded charge would inevitably ruin my already toppling business.

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" ejaculated detective number one, as if it was some trivial matter that had escaped his memory. "You are charged with obtaining money by false pretences from a man named Smith."

The name wasn't Smith; all the names in this narrative will be fictitious, though the facts may be depended upon.

Now this man Smith had put a hundred

pounds into my business as a condition of obtaining employment, and, beyond a little of what the drapers call "window-dressing," I had made no misrepresentations to him whatever; in fact, I had even told him that I was an undischarged bankrupt. He had worked with me for several months without expressing any dissatisfaction, although he was in a position to know all the ins and outs of the concern. Then came the defection of a firm that had been associated with me, and Smith, naturally enough, alarmed about his money, had given me notice. Under the terms of his agreement with me I should have refunded his money; but when the time came I was unable to do this, though I was on the point of making arrangements that would put me in possession not only of money to pay him but of sufficient capital to enable me to carry on the business without monetary anxiety.

These arrangements hung fire for a time, owing to my prospective financiers wanting a bigger slice of the pie than I was inclined to give them; and Smith, very unwisely I think, swore an information against me for obtaining his money by false pretences—no doubt thinking that this was the most effective way of putting the screw on me.

I knew nothing of this until after my arrest, for he had never threatened me with criminal proceedings; and, by a curious coincidence, when I was arrested coming from the post-office, I had been there to send a wire to Smith asking him to meet me in town so that I might pay him—the money to do this having been lent to me that very morning by a friend, and I actually had it in my pocket when I was arrested.

I thought, in my innocence, that if the detective accompanied me to town and saw me pay the money over it would put an end to the proceedings. I mentioned this to him, but he shook his head discouragingly.

"It's out of Smith's hands now," he said, "and he wouldn't be able to take the money if you offered it to him. Any money in your possession that we can fasten on will be kept by the police, and if you are convicted of obtaining money by false pretences from Smith, or anybody else, the court will probably order your money to be handed over to them. But we'd better be getting towards the station, unless you'd like another drink first."

"There isn't a train for an hour yet," I replied.

"I meant the police-station," he said, smiling

at my mistake. "I've got to take you there, you see, as they must enter you up in their books on account of your having been arrested on their ground. I shall have to leave you there for a bit, too, as we can't go up to town until the afternoon."

"In that case we'll have another drink," I said. "I am just as well here as in the police-station, I expect."

Having had the glasses replenished, I asked if they couldn't accompany me to my lodgings so that I might put my things together and settle with my landlady.

"Impossible," said number one decidedly. "I'm chancing it enough as it is, without going any further. I shall have to go to search your lodgings as soon as I've put you inside, and I'll see that your things are packed up all right."

"And I'll settle with your landlady if you'll give me the coin," said number two, chiming in. "She happens to be my sister-in-law, and I should like to see her paid."

"Thank you very much," said I, as I took a five-pound note from my pocket.

I was passing the note over the table to the outstretched hand of detective number two

when detective number one interposed his arm.

"I'm afraid that I cannot allow that," he said. "You see, when a man is charged with fraud nowadays, it is assumed that the money in his possession is part of what he has got on the cross, and we have to stick to it until the case is decided. It would be as much as my job is worth to let you make away with any money you may happen to have on you."

"That's all right," said number two resignedly. "It's for you to say, and if you can't see your way to letting my sister-in-law have her money, she must go without it, that's all."

"Awfully sorry, old man," said number one; "but duty's duty, you know."

A minute or two afterwards number one said that he must go outside, and asked me to move over to the side of number two. "I'll leave him with you for a minute or two," said he, looking meaningly at number two.

"Give me that money, quick," said number two as soon as the door had closed on his colleague. "If he don't know anything about it he can't get into any row, can he?"

I handed over the five-pound note.

"Got any more money you want to send

anywhere?" whispered the detective. "I'll see it gets there all right if you like to hand it over."

Then it occurred to me that I would like my friend to have his hundred pounds back, and I asked the detective if he would take it, as my friend lived in the town and was well known.

He consented without any hesitation whatever, and I gave him the envelope containing the notes, just as I had received it from my friend that morning.

No doubt I ought to have tipped the detective handsomely for his complaisance, but I wasn't so well acquainted then with the ways of detectives as I am now, and I was afraid to offer him anything. I expect he was greatly disappointed at my want of appreciation of the service he was rendering me. He was well rewarded, however, by my friend, who was glad enough to get his hundred pounds back under the circumstances.

When number one came back, he pulled a pair of very bright handcuffs out of his pocket and, jingling them jocosely in his hand, said—

"Now then, are you coming quietly, or shall I have to put these on?"

Any one seeing the three of us walking

abreast down the High Street would never have guessed that I was a prisoner on a serious charge. The London detective was in high spirits, and laughed and chatted like a tripper, while the local man was in a sportive mood also, and introduced me to a uniformed sergeant as "an officer from London" who had come down to arrest the other detective. The sergeant was of a sympathetic nature, and feelingly told the London man to cheer up as imprisonment wasn't half bad when one got used to it.

I didn't do much of the laughing and joking myself; but I did not realize, all the same, that I was in the serious position I afterwards found myself in. Surely, I thought, there could not be anything serious in a charge that the detectives treated with such levity. I discovered afterwards that levity in a detective is not a good sign for the prisoner.

When we got to the police-station the detectives put on their duty expressions, and I was relegated to my proper place as prisoner.

Particulars of my name, age, physical description, and so forth were entered in a book, and then I was asked if I had a knife or matches in my pockets. Having delivered up my knife and match-box, I was handed over to the gaoler to be

"put back," which is the police synonym for being placed in a cell.

"There," said the gaoler affably, as he ushered me into a large cell, "there's room enough for you to go for a walk in there."

CHAPTER II

THE "TAPPER"

I WAS only in that cell for something like a couple of hours, while the detectives went to my lodgings to turn over my belongings and have a few drinks together, but by the time they came to let me out I felt as if I had been there a week or two. It was the weariest two hours I ever passed. People talk about time hanging heavily on their hands, but I don't think that any man can appreciate how leaden the wings of time can be until he finds himself in a police-cell with no definite idea as to how long he has got to stay there. I had to pass many whole days in my cell with nothing to occupy my hands or my mind, many and many of them, before I was through with my "dose," but no whole day of them all seemed half so long as that first two hours I ever spent in solitary confinement.

At last the key turned in the lock, and the gaoler bade me "Come on."

I followed him into the charge-room, where I found the detectives awaiting me.

Without uttering a word, detective number one handed me back my knife and matchbox, and motioned to me to follow him into the street. As I moved on, detective number two closed on me behind, as if he were afraid that I might stop in the police-station and let the other detective find himself in the street without me.

I had eaten but very little breakfast that morning, and as it was long past lunch-time I felt very hungry. I accordingly asked if I could be allowed to have something to eat.

"No time to have more than a sandwich now," said detective number one; "the train leaves in a quarter of an hour. You should have had your lunch sent into the station while you were waiting for us. They would have sent out and got you anything you liked to order—if you had money to pay for it."

I felt as I had missed something. How nicely I could have filled in that terribly wearisome two hours in anticipating and then consuming a grilled sole, a spatchcocked pigeon, and a half bottle of good claret.

We had a few minutes to wait when we got to the railway station, and detective number two

suggested that I might get a sandwich in the refreshment room; but number one advised me not to trouble about anything more solid than a drink, as he would give me an opportunity of having a "good feed" in town before he "took me in," as he put it.

"Got a season ticket?" asked number one.

I replied to the effect that I had a monthly ticket.

"That's a fare saved anyway," said the detective. "Come on, I'll stand you a drink if you like."

We had the drinks, but the detective was so absorbed in conversation with his colleague when the time came for paying that I did the settling myself.

Number one noticed what I had done as soon as the act of paying was completed, and, protesting that I ought not to have done it, proceeded to order cigars.

I objected to this, as I had several cigars still in my case, so he put his money back into his pocket saying, with a trace of severity in his tone, that when he asked any one to have a drink he expected to be allowed to pay for it.

I mildly suggested that if he felt hurt at my paying for the drinks we had better have another

at his expense, but he said that there wasn't time, and led the way to the platform.

He ushered me into an empty third-class carriage, first satisfying himself that the door on the other side was locked; and after he had got in himself, detective number two stood at the door until the train was on the point of starting, when he got in also, saying that he didn't like the idea of parting from us, and would come along, as far as the first stop.

When the train was well out of the station, detective number one produced an "Engaged" slip and stuck it on one of the windows on the platform side.

I asked him if it was usual to engage a whole compartment when he had a prisoner in charge; but the only reply I got was a wink, which I took as an intimation that he had engaged the compartment quite unofficially.

At the first stop the local detective got out after cordially shaking hands with me as well as with his colleague. When he was getting up to go out, something seemed to strike him, and, putting his hand in his pocket, he pulled out a piece of paper which he put before my eyes.

"Do you know that chap?" he asked.

I looked at the piece of paper and saw that

it was a note from my friend who had lent me the £100 saying that he had duly received it.

"What's that?" asked the London detective.

"Only a note written to me by some one I thought he knew," replied the local man as he put the paper in his pocket again.

At the moment I thought this was a bit of make-believe and that the London man knew that I had passed the money to his colleague, but I afterwards discovered that the London man's complaisance only extended to the money for my landlady, and that the local detective had returned the hundred pounds "on his own."

"How much money have you got on you?" asked the detective suddenly, after we had been smoking in silence for some time.

"About fifteen or sixteen pounds," I replied.

"That's a good bit of money to lose," he replied musingly.

"But I don't propose to lose it," I rejoined.

"Can't help yourself. As soon as you get to Bow Street they'll take it off you, and that's the last you'll see of it. As I told you before, they'll hand it over to this chap Smith when you are convicted."

"But I'm not convicted yet, and don't think that there is any chance of my being

convicted. As far as I know—and I ought to be the one to know if anybody does—I've not done anything against the law at all. I certainly am not conscious of having told Mr. Smith anything that could be twisted into a false pretence by even an Old Bailey lawyer."

"You wait," said he with a chuckle. "You don't know as much about Old Bailey barristers as I do. When you hear the counsel for the prosecution reckoning you up, you will be paralyzed with astonishment that you have not done time long ago."

"Well my conscience is pretty clear," I retorted, "if I have ever robbed anybody, it must have been in my sleep; and, as far as this man Smith's money is concerned, he stood no more chance of losing it than if it had been safely stowed away in the Bank of England. I don't think for a minute that this case will ever get as far as the Old Bailey: I expect that to-morrow's hearing before the magistrate will finish it."

"I hope so," said the detective sceptically. "I'll tell the magistrate that you said what you have just said when I arrested you if you like: it would look well in the papers."

I replied to the effect that I should be much

obliged to him if he would; but he changed his mind before the hearing, and what he did say didn't look at all well in the papers and did me a great deal of harm, though he afterwards denied that he had said it.

"I try to make it as easy as I can for anybody that passes through my hands," he continued. "and I have had a good many presents from gentlemen situated like yourself. If it wasn't for little bits of sugar like that, our job wouldn't be worth picking up."

This was little short of a direct request to hand over some of the money I had about me; but I didn't see why I should give it to him. I learned afterwards that he would not have resented the gift of a sovereign—at least, I met a man who said that he had given him one, which had been received gratefully—and if I had known this at the time, I would cheerfully have parted with so much; but I was under the impression that anything less than a ten-pound note would have been regarded as an insult, and I didn't think that it was in his power to do me ten pounds' worth of good. I was mistaken: I am convinced now that if I had satisfied his longing to possess some of my money, it would have done me a great deal of good; and if I had gone to the

length of tipping him ten pounds, I should not have been convicted at all.

I have set down my conversation with this detective word for word as I remember it, and leave it to the reader to judge whether or not he was asking me for money. I did not give him any money, it is true, and I am not therefore in a position to state positively of my own knowledge that London detectives accept money presents from prisoners. I heard a great deal on the subject, however, before I was through my "little bit," and I am afraid that there is no room for doubt that the general run of detectives make a practice of trying to "tap" a prisoner who they are satisfied has money about him.

I quite believe, too, that it is to a prisoner's advantage to take any opportunity of this sort to raise a kindly feeling towards him in the detective's heart, inasmuch as in the course of the investigations incidental to getting up a case against a prisoner, as it proceeds from remand to remand, the detective sergeant employed in the case, who is generally the same who makes the arrest, finds many opportunities for making things easier for the prisoner, or the reverse, that he may make use of without laying himself open to any suspicion of dereliction of duty.

My detective kept harping on the same string all the way to London, but all he got out of me was my cigar-case, which he admired so persistently that I gave it to him as a souvenir.

When we got to London, I reminded him of his promise to let me have a good meal before he "took me in"; but his friendly manner had dried up, and he replied, curtly, to the effect that there wasn't time for me to have anything then, but that I would be allowed to have something sent in from outside as soon as I got to Bow Street.

I remonstrated; but he had evidently come to the conclusion that there was no profit to be got out of me, and that he would only be wasting time if he hung about with me, so his only reply to my reminder of his promise was to call a hansom and give the driver the direction: "Bow Street Police Station."

CHAPTER III

THE CELLS

"WHAT did you bring him here for?" asked the inspector on duty surlily, as soon as I was introduced to him. "You know as well as I do that he belongs to Grays Inn Road. Don't you think that I've got enough to do without shoving other people's work on to me?"

The detective sergeant deprecatingly maintained that he had brought me to the right shop, and leaned over the inspector's desk to give his reasons for thinking so. As we three were the only persons in the charge-room and the door was wide open, there was a splendid opening for me to make a bolt for liberty if I had been desirous of taking advantage of it, and I speculated, while they were arguing, as to the odds against their losing a resourceful professional criminal under such circumstances.

"Get in there," snapped the inspector, motioning me to a little iron-railed enclosure.

When I had taken up position there, he read the warrant to me, took a list of the contents of my pockets, with the exception of a sixpenny novel which he allowed me to keep, and made them up into a parcel. Then he entered in a book minute particulars of my age, personal appearance, and clothing. Having done this, he rang a bell and the gaoler entered.

The inspector jerked his thumb in my direction, and the gaoler looked at me and jerked his thumb in the direction of the door leading to the cells. Not a word was spoken. The detective-sergeant was looking straight through me, as if he had never seen me before, and was not at all interested in the sight of me now.

I went through the door with the gaoler close on my heels, and presently found myself in a long passage with cells all along one side of it, the other side being the wall that looked on to the yard.

The gaoler unlocked one of these cells and motioned me to enter.

"Make yourself at home," said he, when I got inside; "I'll bring you a rug presently. I won't put anyone else in with you if I can help it."

The "apartment" I had been invited to make myself at home in was about the size of a billiard

table, that is to say, about twelve feet by six. Along one side of it ran a bench about eighteen inches wide, with an uncovered convenience at one end. There was no window, the cell being lighted in the daytime by deadlights fixed in the roof and by what light could come through the open ironwork of the door. There was an aperture in the upper part of the door about nine inches long by four wide, which was used for the purpose of passing anything in to the prisoner or talking to him when occasion arose.

I was very hungry, and when the gaoler brought me a coloured rug a few minutes afterwards I told him what the detective had said as to my being able to get some dinner, and asked him if he could manage it for me.

"You can have anything you like so long as you have the money to pay for it," he said; "but perhaps you had better let me get what I can, as it may not be possible to get any fancy grub at this time of night."

I gratefully assented, but asked him to get me some tea or coffee if I had to have a scratch feed instead of a regular dinner with wine.

"All right; I'll do what I can," he replied. "Where's the money?"

"The inspector has got my money," I said.

He looked at me pityingly and shook his head.

"I'm afraid that you won't get any square meal to-night," he said; "but I'll go and see the inspector all the same and see what he says."

He went away, and in a short time afterwards the face of the inspector appeared at the booby-hutch.

"What's this about your wanting a swell dinner?" he asked. "Didn't you get anything before you came in?"

I told him of the detective's promise that I would be allowed to have dinner sent in, and that I had had nothing since a very light breakfast.

"Well, he might have taken you somewhere and let you have a feed before bringing you in," said the inspector. "He knew very well that I shouldn't be able to part with any of the money taken from you once it was entered up in the book. You can't send out for anything, but you can have an 'allowance' if you like."

I had no idea what an "allowance" was, and I didn't like to ask, but I gratefully expressed my desire to receive it.

I waited for about two hours for that "allowance," but it didn't arrive, and I got sick and miserable for want of food.

About a quarter of an hour after the inspector's visit I heard footsteps coming along the corridor; careful footsteps, as if the man who was making them was carrying something that would spill if he were hasty. I made sure that this was the long-promised food, and, as the footsteps came nearer and my nostrils recognized the fragrant smell of hot coffee, I was sure of it. Alas! the footsteps didn't get as far as my cell: they stopped next door. What a sickening disappointment that was: I can feel the blight of it now, as I write, though it is long behind me.

Then came the long period of expectancy that ended in my overcoming my natural reluctance to give trouble and ringing the bell.

A fresh gaoler came to the door: the other one had gone off duty.

"What do you want?" he asked, in a tone that implied that it was like my cheek to want anything.

I explained that the inspector had promised me some food about a couple of hours ago and that I was getting rather anxious about it.

"You've had it, hours ago," said the gaoler emphatically.

There was an audible chuckle from the cell

next door that seemed to tell the gaoler something, and he left me.

"Did *you* get a 'lowance a couple of hours ago?" he asked my neighbour.

"Yus I did, and jolly good it wuz too," said the man in a tone of high good-humour.

"But you had one before, didn't you?"

"I did, an' I can do another if you 'appen to have one about you," replied my understudy, laughing as if he enjoyed the joke.

The gaoler muttered a profane remark and went away.

"Matey! I say, matey!" shouted the man next door to me.

I took no notice.

"Don't be proud, matey, if you are a toff," he continued "I wuz oney wantin' ter tell you ter cheer up 'cos you ain't dead yet."

I still kept a stony silence; I couldn't forgive that "allowance" yet.

"Orlright then," he said resignedly. "Keep yerself to yerself if you want to. I wuz goin' ter offer ter lend you my tame solicitor in the mornin,' but it's no bet now."

Presently the gaoler came and handed me in a mug of steaming hot coffee and three thick hunks of bread and butter.

The coffee was not of the brand I had been used to, and it was any odds that the "butter" had no legal right to the name; but I thought the meal a delicious and satisfactory one, and having enjoyed it, I settled down to the reading of my sixpenny novel by the very dim light that straggled into the cell from a gas-jet placed outside the door.

I had hardly got interested in the book when my attention was distracted by the sounds of broken English being spoken volubly by some-one coming along the passage. As the sounds approached my door, I got up and looked out, to see a young fellow in evening dress who was being gently propelled along the passage by the gaoler and was protesting every yard of the way.

"All right," said the gaoler, as they passed my cell, "I'll go and fetch the inspector and you can talk to him. He'll very likely do what you want, but I've got to lock you up."

"I cannot stob in dis blace," said the young swell. "I veesh you to send a telegram to my fader an 'e vill dell you to let me go."

The inspector came to him in a few minutes, and explained to him that, having been arrested on an extradition warrant, he would have to

"stob in dis blace"; but that a telegram could be sent to his father if he had the money to pay for it, though it would be a sure waste of money, as it was at his father's instance that he had been arrested.

I learned afterwards that this young Dutchman had forged his father's name for a considerable amount, and was making away with the plunder in rapid life in the West End when he was arrested at a fashionable hotel. The telegram to his father had no effect, and, after spending several weeks at Brixton, he was eventually extradited. I saw him often at Brixton, and every time I saw him he was crying. He was very sorry for himself indeed; but I fancy that he was sorrowing over having been landed in prison and not regretting his misdeed. I often find myself speculating as to whether he eventually got veal or was left to browse on husks.

Up to the advent of the Dutchman I thought that life in a police cell was rather slow and monotonous; but after his arrival things brightened up to such an extent that there was a continuous variety entertainment that lasted until about three o'clock next morning.

Following close upon the gentleman from

Holland came a very stout woman with a new surgical bandage on her head.

"Oh, please, policeman, don't lock me up!" she moaned, as she was being hustled along the passage. "I've never been locked up in my life. Oh, do let me go home to my children! They're only little ones, and they'll be wondering what has become of me and crying their eyes out. Oh, do let me go! please! please!"

The two stolid policemen who were conducting her made no reply to her ravings, which presently merged into hysterical shrieks as she saw the cell door close upon her. Poor children, waiting hour after hour in the dark for mother to return from that "five minutes" round the corner.

The next lodger to arrive was a man who was very drunk and very strong. He fought every foot of the passage with the policemen who were trying to get him along, and as he fought and struggled he protested against his arrest with all the force of a pair of very powerful lungs.

"What a rotten shame bringing me here," he yelled. "I ain't done nothing—I ain't even disorderly—and my wife'll be waiting up fer me. I'll make some o' you rotten blighters sit up for this, see if I don't."

When they had got him into a cell he kicked at the door and shouted demands and appeals to be let out, on the grounds that his wife was sitting up for him and that he would get the sack if he was not at work at six o'clock in the morning, until he had kicked and raved himself into silence. He was quiet for perhaps an hour. Then a lady in one of the cells down the passage started singing, in a cracked falsetto voice, "Yield not to temptation, for temptation is sin." This appeared to touch the gentleman whose wife was waiting up for him on the raw, for he wept aloud, and his weeping was like unto the bellowing of a sick bull. When he had wept as much as he felt he wanted to, he called the bedraggled street-walker, who was still singing persistently, an angel, and kept on calling her an angel until it became monotonous to the lady herself, and she desired him, with sundry unangelic expressions, to "Shut up."

Then two "drunks" were shoved into my cell, and made themselves comfortable on the floor, as I was lying at full length on the bench, and did not see why I should move. One of them, who spoke with a strong German accent, was argumentatively drunk, while the other's intoxication ran to facetiousness. The German

would insist on discussing Tariff Reform, and for a long time the other one replied to him with good-natured chaffing remarks. At last the Englishman's fund of good temper gave out, and he testily told the other to "shut up," adding some uncomplimentary remarks about sausage and sauerkraut.

"Ach!" said the Deutscher, disgustedly. "I shall not speak mit you any more; you vas a beastly man."

It was beyond his strength to keep silence however, and in a few minutes he said in a wheedling tone—

"Dis Jamberlain vos a great man! Not so, my friendt? You tink he will be brime minisder, eh?"

"There you are again, sauerkraut," said the other ill-temperedly. "I thought you was choked off. I'll tell you what, I'd vote for Chamberlain or anybody else that would do something to keep your sort in their own countries. Our coppers and our prison warders are all bein' overworked on account of our own 'wrong 'uns' havin' to put up with so much foreign competition."

The German got on his feet, took off his coat, and rolled up his sleeves.

"You vill have a little fight mit me my friendt, eh?" he asked cheerfully.

"As much as you like," said the Englishman, scrambling to his feet. "I've been feeling like that for a long time."

Just at that moment the opening in the cell door was filled up by the face of the inspector.

"Which is Johnson?" he asked.

"That's me," said the Englishman.

"Well, Johnson, that house where you told us to send for bail for you has been pulled down. There's been no house there for the past six months."

"That's right," said Johnson; "I'd quite forgotten for the moment that I didn't live there any longer."

"Well, we're not going to send anywhere else, so you'd better make yourself comfortable. It'll be a good thing for you to try and remember where you do live by the morning, too, as the magistrate likes to know little things like that."

"We're very crowded here, inspector," I ventured to say.

"So you are," he admitted. "These two chaps were only put in here for an hour or two until they got a bit sober and were bailed out.

As they don't look like being bailed I'll move 'em."

Being left to myself again, I tried to compose myself to sleep, and at last dropped off after every one was too exhausted to continue the pandemonium, and there was modified silence punctuated by snores in several keys.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLICE COURT

IN the morning, before it was light, we were let out one by one to wash at a lavatory basin fixed in the passage wall. After that, those who had money and wanted breakfast ordered it, and it was supplied from an eating-house outside. Those who had no money, or whose money had been impounded, were regaled with an "allowance" like I had given me the previous night. There was not much demand for solid food, and even I, who had had so little the previous day, could not tackle the three thick slices of bread and butter, though I was very glad to get the coffee.

About ten o'clock the policemen in charge of the cases came, and each one escorted his particular prisoner to a waiting-room just outside the door leading into the police-court.

There were about a couple of dozen prisoners in this room, and my eyes roved over them trying to pick out the people who had taken

leading parts in the previous night's entertainment; but I couldn't fit in the previous night's performance with this morning's appearance of any one of those present. As they appeared this morning, they were a very subdued and humble lot, and any one who hadn't heard them would have had some difficulty in believing that they had made things so lively the night before.

The detective-sergeant who had arrested me had quite lost his friendly manner of the day before, but he unbent so far as to say: "If I was in danger of going to prison I would get Mr. —— to defend me. He's up to all the moves on the board, he is, and he's got the ear of the magistrate more than any other solicitor that practises here. Would you like me to introduce you to him?"

I assented, and he presently brought the solicitor to me.

"I understand that you wish to see me," said he.

"I want somebody to represent me," I replied; "but I should like you to understand that all my available money is in the hands of the police, and that it will be necessary for you to get it out of the hands of the police before you can be paid."

"All right," said he, "I'll go and get a look at the information and see what I can do."

My heart was beating nineteen or more to the dozen as I entered the dock and faced the magistrate, and I had hardly got over my agitation at occupying the centre of the stage in a criminal court for the first time in my life when the proceedings for that day came to an end, and I found myself remanded for a week.

The solicitor applied for bail; but, before the magistrate could give his decision, the detective-sergeant came forward and said that at the next hearing he would be able to bring fresh charges against me involving several thousands of pounds. This remark was reported in all the newspapers; but when, at the next hearing, I applied to have it put upon the depositions, the detective denied that he ever made it, and, though the magistrate must have known that he was lying, he made no comment. I merely give this as an instance of the recklessness of policemen in giving evidence; there was not the slightest foundation for any such remark, and it has always been a puzzle to me how it came to be made. There is no doubt that it did me a great deal of harm, for it enabled that detective-sergeant, in the interval between the first and

second hearing, to persuade one or two people to give evidence against me who would have been on my side if they had not been led to believe that I had been engaged in other shady transactions. This may be a statement that the general public will find a bit hard to swallow; but every man who has been through the criminal mill will bear me out when I say that few men who have stood their trial for a criminal offence leave the dock without a strong conviction as to the absolute unreliability and unfairness of police evidence. I am not whining about my conviction, and do not even say that my imprisonment was undeserved, but I do say that it was brought about by unfair means, and that our boasted fairness in criminal matters is a national delusion. Our criminals are not tried by a jury, as most people imagine; they are tried by detectives, and if the detectives find them guilty, they stop at nothing to get them convicted.

The magistrate fixed prohibitive bail, and then the solicitor made an application for the money that had been taken from me so that I might use it for purposes of my defence; but the magistrate shook his head, and the police hung on to the money until I was convicted, when it was placed at my disposal.

The solicitor lost all interest in me when he saw that my money could not be got at, and he never appeared for me again, nor asked for any fee for his first appearance.

I had sunk something like two thousand pounds in my business, and could have sold it for, perhaps, half this sum as a going concern; but it stopped short with my arrest. The book debts could not be got in, and the police turned the office upside down and took away all books and papers. My assets were thus entirely destroyed, and my entire available resources were in the hands of the police who would not part with them, so that I was compelled to conduct my own defence.

Remanded prisoners, while awaiting the prison van to take them to Brixton Prison, are pigged together in large cells with other prisoners who have been convicted and are awaiting the Black Maria to take them to Pentonville.

The thing that struck me most was the lack of reserve that prisoners thus thrown together showed towards each other. On that first of my six remand days there were two prisoners in the cell with me who had that day been sentenced. One of them had got fourteen days for stealing

a goose, and was as pleased with himself as if the magistrate had given him a substantial present.

"Fourteen days!" he ejaculated gleefully, "an' I expected a stretch (a year). I told 'im that I was hungry an' that a sudden temptation took hold of me."

"'Anythin' known about him,' sez 'e.

"'No,' sez the split (detective). 'The police ain't got anythin' aginst 'im.'

"Lorlumny! I wonder what they'd say if they knowed as I'd got three sessions cons behind me, and was entitled to a stretch under the Act. I thought as I was a goner at Brixton yesterday when I see that swivel-eyed screw (warder) from the Scrubs lookin' at me very hard as he went round with the rest of the screws and splits tryin' to twig old hands; but he wasn't lookin' at me at all, as it turned out. Fourteen days! an' it was a rippin' fine goose too."

"But I thought that they could recognize everybody now by their finger-prints," I said timidly.

"So they can, or they lets on as they can; but finger-prints don't affect me this time, 'cos my other bits was done afore they come in. All they've got to go on with old hands is their dials,

and they sends screws an' splits to have a walk round the exercise yards at Brixton to see if they can reckernize any old pals. I knowed a good few as walked round while I was there this last week, but not one of them spotted me."

"And would you have got twelve months, or a 'stretch' as you call it, if you had been recognized!"

"Ab—so—bloomin'—lutely. You see, under this 'ere Prevention of Crimes Act—about the wickedest act that Parlyment ever passed—a man that's been convicted twice at sessions or assizes is supposed to be allus on the look out for chances ter commit felonies, an' any rozzer (policeman) as sees him lookin' in a shop winder, or standin' at a street corner, or lookin'on at a fight or a street accident, can run him in an' charge him for 'loitering, being a person subject to the Prevention of Crimes Act,' an' the magistrate can give 'im anythin' up to a stretch without any more proof than the rozzer's bare word. This means that every man as has been convicted twice at sessions is at the mercy of every split and every rozzer as feels that he wants a job. I couldn't have grumbled if they'd worked the Act on me, 'cos I did have the goose, but I've knowed many a chap as has got a stretch when

he wasn't doin' anything and hadn't any idea of doin' anything'."

Then the cell door was opened, and the other prisoner was ushered in. This man was very glum, for he had actually got the maximum twelve months "under the Act"; and thoroughly deserved it—for his asinine carelessness if for nothing else.

He had stolen a watch and chain in a crowd outside the Oxford Music Hall, and, though he was an old hand at the game, had been so utterly foolish as to go to the same neighbourhood the next night actually wearing the stolen seal on his own watch-chain. The man who had lost the jewellery happened to be there too—on the look-out, he said, for a suspect who was not the prisoner—and, recognizing the seal, mentioned the matter to a policeman, who promptly laid hands on the napping thief. There was no direct proof of his having stolen the article, but there was hardly any doubt about it, and "the Act" enabled justice to be done.

"I asked him to let me out on bail while I got married to a young woman as I've got into trouble," said this prisoner pathetically; "but he said as I'd get her into worse trouble by marrying her, and hoped as she'd ferget all

about me afore I'd done the twelve months' hard he was goin' ter give me. Blimy, some o' these blokes ain't got no perishin' hearts at all."

Another man in the cell had been fined ten shillings for being drunk and disorderly, and I identified him in my own mind with the man who had been so solicitous about his wife sitting up. He was now waiting the result of a communication that has been sent to the said wife saying that unless she could produce ten shillings by three o'clock he would be carted off to Pentonville for seven days. When the poor woman arrived, she told him tearfully, but without a trace of reproach in her tone, that there was nothing in the home on which she could raise the money, and that she had tried to borrow it without success. She now suggested, as a last resource, that the man should consent to her approaching his employer.

"'Tain't no good goin' there," said the man despondently. "He said the last time as he'd gie me the sack if it happened agin."

"I can but try," the woman replied, putting as much hope into her voice as she could.

"All right; but it won't be no good, so I'll make up my mind to do the seven days," he rejoined.

It looked very much as if he would have to do this, for he was actually standing in the passage waiting his turn to get into the Pentonville van when his wife returned and triumphantly displayed a half-sovereign, which she held through the bars at the end of the passage.

"'E wouldn't do nothin' fer you," she said, gleefully. "'E said as the seven days 'ud do you no end o' good; but 'e give me this to help me along whilst you was in, an' 'e med me promise, 'e did, that I wouldn't pay the fine wi' it; but I'm goin' to, an' you'll be out in a minute, ole man, so cheer up."

"She's a reg'lar pal ter me, my missis is," said the man, joyfully.

"Well, see if you can't be a bit of a pal to her," I said. "It isn't very pallish to go off on your own and fill yourself up with beer, leaving her to find the money to pay the fine."

"She won't 'ave ter find any more money for fines," he said with sincerity. "I'm goin' ter give the booze a long rest now."

Let us hope that he did give the booze a rest, though most of us would be willing to lay odds that he didn't.

There was another "drunk" in the cell whom it would have been a real pleasure to kick. He

had been out of work for weeks and weeks, and things at home were on the rock bottom. The previous day he had unexpectedly had a sovereign given to him, and instead of taking it home he had gone on the drink with it, with the result that he was now up against a fine of ten shillings, or the usual seven days' alternative. In his case there was no earthly prospect of finding the money, and he was quite resigned to going up to "the 'Ville" for seven days. In taking leave of him his wife said in a wheedling tone—

"Have you got a few coppers left as you could give me, Jim? There is nothing at home, an' the kids 'asn't had anythin' to eat to-day."

The brute assured her, with an appeal to the Almighty to strike him dead if he was lying, that he hadn't got a "brass farden"; but after she had gone away crying he said with a snigger—

"I've got 'arf-a-dollar, but I couldn't give 'er that, 'cos I shall want it fer a drink when I come out."

CHAPTER V

ON REMAND

MY case was over for the day before eleven o'clock, and from that time until after five in the afternoon, when the Brixton van arrived, was a very long wait without food. I asked the sergeant gaoler if I could not have something to eat, and he replied to the effect that I could have as much as I liked, and a certain quantity of beer or wine also, if I had money to pay for it. I told him the old story about my money having been taken away from me, and as soon as he found I was penniless his civil and accommodating tone turned to brusqueness, and he told me shortly that I could get nothing until I arrived at Brixton.

Everybody who is brought into contact with a prisoner during the police-court stage of his case is on the make. As I have already said, the detective who arrests him expects something; the gaoler at the court will ask him if he

wants the change out of the half-crown he has given to the officer to purchase food; the sergeant in charge of the police-van is not averse to earning a shilling by doing little services; the warders at Brixton hover round him with solicitous attentions if he looks as if he has money or moneyed friends; and even the doorkeeper at the court will take a tip from a prisoner's friends if he can get it. I do not remember having seen anything about these practices in print, but I do not see any reason for being reticent about them: they undoubtedly exist, as any man who has been through the mill can testify. One of the warders at Brixton even asked me to give him my dirty underclothing, and got it, too. I do not think that many people will blame them for taking what they can get; I certainly do not, and would supplement my miserable pay in the same way if I were in the same position and had the chance.

At last the Brixton van arrived, and the "remands" were brought out of the cells and stood in a line in the passage. Then the sergeant-gaoler stood at the door with the blue commitment papers in his hand, and as he named a prisoner, that prisoner passed him and got into the van.

The man in front of me was of a build that is evidently not criminal, for when I got into the van he was just finding that he could not get into one of the little cells that lined both sides of it. He was eventually directed to stand sideways in the passage that ran up the centre, and in that position made that journey and subsequent ones to and from the court. He eventually got eighteen months' hard labour, and I expect that he would have found himself to be a better fit for the van at the end of it, for prison life is death to adipose tissue.

Prison-van customs are very free and easy—even the sergeant in charge will gossip with the prisoners on occasion. The top halves of the cell doors, which let down like railway-carriage windows, were always left down, and the inmates of the vehicle had unrestricted intercourse with one another, and passed cigarettes and matches from hand to hand. When the noise got beyond bounds, the sergeant would say: "A little less noise, please," but this was the extent of his interference.

It was a very long journey, that drive to Brixton, for we had to go round to some of the other courts and collect their passengers, and it was close upon seven o'clock before the van

rolled up to the "reception ward" of the prison and we were invited to get out.

We were ushered into a sort of entrance hall and here we stood round the walls while the reception warder checked us off against the commitment papers and gave the prison-van sergeant a receipt for our bodies. When this ceremony had been completed, we were marched along a passage with cells on one side of it to a small desk at the end, where sat a warder who demanded from each man in turn sundry biographical particulars which he entered as given on a four-paged octavo form.

Then we were passed on round a corner and told to take our boots and socks off, stand on a sheet that was spread on the stone floor by the side of a door, and wait our turns to be searched.

The sheet was a bit crowded by the time I got to it, and I stood on the stones, which brought forth an admonition from the warder to "stand on the sheet; they won't give you any less if you get rheumatics in your feet."

One by one as our names were called we went into the search-room and stripped to the shirt behind a screen. Then one warder took our weights and heights, while another searched our

clothing. A third warder, sitting at a desk with a big book in front of him, took particulars of the contents of our pockets. The contents of mine, on arrest, with the exception of the money, had been returned to me before leaving Bow Street; but I only retained them until I got into this search-room, as everything is taken away and made up into a parcel, which is given back to the prisoner when he leaves. For some reason, which is hard to get at, there is special attention given to the prevention of prisoners at Brixton retaining possession of pieces of lead-pencil. Any lead-pencil turned out of his pockets by a prisoner himself, or found about him by the searching warder is at once confiscated and not returned to the prisoner with his other property. I made a special application to the governor of the prison to have a pencil I had brought in returned to me when I went out for the next hearing at the police court, so that I might use it for the purpose of taking notes for my defence, and my application was refused.

I have no fault whatever to find with the way in which the warders conducted these searching operations, and, as far as I could see, they did not degrade any one more than was absolutely necessary; but I must say that I did see them

make very minute examinations in one or two cases where the prisoner was under suspicion of trying to best them.

Any man who is wearing decent clothes is allowed to retain them while on remand if he wishes to do so; but no option is given to prisoners whose clothing is either ragged or dirty. Men who do not wish, or are not allowed, to wear their own clothes, are given a suit of blue prison clothing—blue is the colour for debtors and unconvicted prisoners, brown for second division, and khaki for hard labour—and their own outfits are bundled up, without any folding or precautions to avoid creasing of coats or bashing of hats, and stoved. Some of the men whose clothes are treated like this look a bit scarecrowish when they go in; but they are all without exception fully qualified for the job when they go out.

"Pick up your clothes and go through there," said the searching-warder to me when he had finished "going over me."

He pointed to a door on the opposite side of the room, and, going through it as directed, I found myself in a large bath-house with a long row of luxurious porcelain baths, in cubicles open at both ends, running down the centre. The only

criticism that can be made of the bathing arrangements is that little or no room is available in the cubicles for dressing, and that a prisoner is hunted out of the bath almost as soon as he gets in.

After the bath, I was directed to a door which opened into a big room having little sentry-box-like cells round three sides of it, the other side being taken up with clothes and linen racks and the door of the medical inspection room. As soon as I appeared in this room, a warder escorted me to one of the little cells and locked me in. There was a shelf at the back to serve as a seat, and sitting down on this, I waited patiently for the feeding to start.

I hadn't waited long when the door was banged open, and a warder asked me if I had left the prison that morning. On my replying in the negative, he handed me an eight-ounce brown loaf, cut in half and made into an agricultural sort of sandwich by the insertion of a five-ounce wedge of preserved meat between the halves. He left the door open, and next moment another warder came along and asked, "Do you want any of this?" as he pointed to a large can of porridge that a prisoner with him was carrying.

I didn't want any of it, and at that moment was absolutely certain that I should never be wanting any of it; but I was mistaken, for it didn't take me a week, when I started in to work out my sentence, to discover that porridge eaten with a fairly liberal allowance of salt is miles in front of porridge eaten with milk and sugar. Prisoners who had only been away for the day and were returned on further remand got no meat, as it had been given to them on leaving in the morning to make their dinner on at the court, and such men had to make their evening meal on dry bread alone, if they didn't happen to fancy the porridge. I never saw anybody eat the porridge at Brixton, unless they were old hands at prison life; the first timers passed it to a man, but it would be pretty safe to bet that they were not passing it a month afterwards.

I made a very satisfactory meal on the bread and meat, although the meat was nothing like up to Chicago standard, and tasted more like pressed beef-tea meat after the beef-tea had done with it than anything else. This kind of preserved meat forms the *piece de resistance* of every Sunday dinner in prison, and I notice that quite a large number of prisoners never ate it; but I

wasn't one of the fastidious ones, and always looked with longing eyes at the rejected slabs when I saw them in the dinner-tins outside the cell doors as I marched past them to afternoon chapel.

CHAPTER VI

MEDICAL INSPECTION

I HADN'T time to finish my supper before the doors were thrown open again, and we were told to form a queue in front of the door of the medical inspection-room. The food was too precious to leave behind, so I carried it with me, and went on eating it in fear and trembling lest I was sinning against the prison regulations. There were many others doing the same thing, but the only notice the warder took was to admonish us to "get that down you afore the doctor comes." One old chap in prison dress surreptitiously captured a tin of porridge that was standing on the seat of an open cell, and feverishly scooped up the cold mess with his hand, licking the stuff off his fingers lovingly as if it were the daintiest of dainty morsels. I couldn't understand his taste at all then, and thought there was something beast-like about his proceedings; but I hadn't been in prison under sentence long before I began to feel very much

like the same thing myself, and would have considered the finding of an extra pint of porridge as a very great piece of good fortune indeed.

"Open your coats and waistcoats, unbutton your trousers, and get ready to pull up your shirts," shouted the warder, as the doctor passed into the inspection-room.

Then we went in before him, one out next in, and the doctor examined us at the rate of about one a minute.

Dr. Scott, who has recently vacated the appointment on promotion to be Governor of Holloway, was the principal medical officer of Brixton Prison then, and it was he who was examining the prisoners that evening.

There are very few men, I imagine, among the many thousands who passed through Brixton during his term of office there, who don't think kindly thoughts of Dr. Scott, though he is hardly the type of man to diverge from the strict line of duty in order to do a favour to anybody. He is a dapper little man with a friendly twinkle in his eyes that seems to radiate sympathy all around him, and as soon as I saw him I seemed to receive a sort of telepathic assurance that the outlook for me was not nearly so black as my fancy had painted it.

"Are you all right?" he asked, as he applied the stethoscope to my chest.

"I am in good health, as far as I know," I replied.

"You're feeling a bit depressed though, aren't you? That is hardly to be wondered at in the circumstances. Have you ever been in trouble before?"

I hardly understood what he meant and looked at him questioningly.

"Have you ever been in prison, I mean," he said smilingly. "Didn't you know that the only sort of trouble known to a gaol-bird is the being in prison?"

I didn't know it, and said so. I also denied having "been in trouble" myself before.

"I was satisfied that you hadn't, but it is usual to ask," he said apologetically. "You must cheer up and hope for the best; it doesn't do anybody good to brood over misfortunes."

This was all that passed between us, but his manner conveyed a great deal more than his actual words did; it seemed to say to me that I would have to be proved guilty before he could harbour any ill opinion of me.

After all had been examined, a principal warder came in and seated himself at a table in

the middle of the room on which there was a pile of yellow cloth disks with a leather button-hole stitched on to them, and bearing large black numbers.

As the principal warder called out a name, the prisoner who owned it went up to the table and received one of the yellow disks bearing the number and location of the cell he was to occupy. He was told to hang this label on the top button of his coat, and then he received a hair-brush and comb, a pillow-case, a towel, and a pair of sheets. When thus outfitted, he passed over into one of several groups that were being formed at the other side of the room.

"Put me on the C 2's, sir, if you please, sir. I am a good worker, sir," said, in wheedling, tones, a big strapping prisoner who was clad in prison blue.

"Hello! You here again?" said the principal warder. "Same old thing, I see," he continued, as he looked at the man's descriptive form. "I suppose you'll be fullied (committed for trial) this time."

"Yes, the magistrate said to-day that he was goin' ter send me up; but it wasn't me as done it this time, sir, it really wasn't."

"No, I don't suppose it was: you don't know how to do that sort of thing," said the principal warder drily, and the prisoner laughed.

"Do you want a cleaner?" asked the principal warder, turning to the warder in charge of one of the groups.

"Yes, sir," replied the warder. "I'd be glad to have him, too, if he's going to be fullied; he's a good man."

"All right then," said the principal, as he handed the coveted badge to the prisoner.

I learned afterwards that this gentleman was in the habit of chastening any unfortunate policeman he might happen to come across after he had been having a night out; and as he was much given to having nights out, his convictions for assaulting the police were numerous. His anxiety to get posted to No. 2 ward of the C block was due to the fact that that ward was where the majority of the swell prisoners who paid half-a-crown a week for their cells and had their meals sent in from outside were located, and cleaners there earned money by waiting on them, and had the reversion of any food they couldn't eat, so that it was a "pinch" for an impecunious prisoner to get there.

At last all the prisoners but myself were disposed of and marched away.

"Take him over to the hospital," said the principal warder to the only officer who was left.

I didn't feel at all like a fit subject for the hospital, and didn't want to go there, as at that time I didn't know and didn't suspect that it was the most comfortable place I could go to. I remarked that there must be some mistake, as there was nothing the matter with me, and the doctor had said nothing about sending me to hospital.

"There's no mistake; the doctor has marked you down for hospital right enough. He must have forgot to ask you whether you'd like to go or not," said the principal warder drily.

If was after eight o'clock then, and the hospital lights were turned down for the night; but a white-jacketed hospital warder on night duty ushered me into a comfortable hospital cell, brought me a mug of hot beef tea, and gave me a book—"White Wings," by the late William Black.

"It's the doctor's orders that your light is to be left on all night, so you can read a bit after you are in bed if you like," he said. "Good

night! Touch that bell if you happen to want anything."

"Good Lord!" thought I, as I got between the clean linen sheets, "this is a bit better treatment than one gets at a first-class hotel."

CHAPTER VII

FIRST FRIENDS

I DIDN'T sleep very well that night, for my thoughts were very troublesome, and the light shining into the cell helped them to keep me wakeful. I was on the point of dropping off several times when I was aroused to wakefulness again by the click of the cover to the observation hole in the door, which showed that the night warder was keeping his eye on me pretty closely. I managed to get soundly asleep at last however, in spite of all these hindrances; but this could not have happened until well on towards morning, because when the bell rang at seven o'clock—it was Sunday morning, when the rousing bell rings at seven instead of at six—I felt like a man who has been awakened directly after he has dropped asleep.

"Just put your slops out here and make your bed," said, very civilly, the warder who opened the door.

This was all I had to do, for a cleaner came

in and tidied up my cell. On the second morning my sense of shame at letting another prisoner wait upon me caused me to ask for a broom so that I might clean the cell myself, and thereafter I did everything in the cell except the periodical scrubbing, which was done on days that I was at the police-court.

Breakfast followed quickly on the collection of slops, as was the case on every Sunday morning throughout the whole term of my imprisonment; the daily routine is not put back an hour on account of the late Sunday morning rising, and everything is hurried until the hour is made up.

For breakfast I got a pint mug of very good tea and a half-pound loaf of excellent white bread cut into slices and buttered.

After breakfast was served there was a long wait until about ten o'clock, when those hospital prisoners who were able to get about were let out into the yard for exercise. I was not, on this first day, put to walk round with the ruck; but was allowed to stroll up and down in a corner in company with a solicitor who was being held in durance *sine die* under an order of the high court because he wouldn't part with some money belonging to a client. He told me that he had

already been in the prison for three months, and looked like being kept there for the rest of his natural life if the court made the production of this money the condition of his release, as he hadn't got the money and saw no earthly prospect of getting it. I believe he was afterwards charged under the Larceny Act with misappropriating the money, and sentenced to a term of penal servitude; but at the time he was in Brixton with me he was simply confined there for contempt of court in not paying the money when an order had been made for him to do so, and he had no idea that a criminal charge would be brought against him in connection with the money. This was not the only solicitor I met in gaol, not by a long chalk. I seemed to be always in daily contact with one or more solicitors during the whole of my prison life, and as I never met even one actor, I couldn't help reflecting upon the fact that though an actor is a "rogue and a vagabond" by statute, he doesn't trouble the judicial authorities much, while the attorneys, though statute-made "gentlemen," are a very criminal body of men. Notwithstanding the fact that there are so many solicitors to be met with in prison, I do not think that solicitors are fundamentally worse men than doctors,

barristers, and parsons. What brings nearly every solicitor to prison who gets there is the fact that he has had the handling of other people's money without there being any sort of check or supervision over him; and in similar circumstances it is highly probable that barristers, doctors, and parsons wouldn't show up any better. "Lead us not into temptation," is the most useful sort of prayer that a man can utter, for few men can withstand temptation in an insidious form, and no man can know whether he is really honest or not until he has done so.

We were not supposed to speak to one another, even while still unconvicted and presumably only at Brixton for safe custody; but, as a matter of fact, there is little restraint of conversation between the prisoners, provided that it is carried on discreetly, and not forced on the warders' notice. I hadn't become alive to this on that Sunday morning, and so said nothing to the solicitor until he opened the conversation by asking the first question that one prisoner invariably asks another: "What are you in for?"

On my replying that I was "in" for obtaining money by false pretences, but that I wasn't guilty, the solicitor politely murmured, "Of

course," and proceeded to explain to me the difference between his status in the prison and that of the ordinary inhabitant.

We hadn't got any further in our confidences when Dr. Scott entered the yard, and we were all formed up in line for his inspection. He had a cheery word for every one and with most of those present he went into medical matters; but in my case he fulfilled the medical part of the interview by putting his stethoscope over the region of my heart on the outside of my over-coat and keeping it there for about two seconds.

"There isn't much the matter with you," said the solicitor as soon as Dr. Scott had gone and we were walking up and down again.

"No, I don't think there is," I replied, "and I cannot imagine why he sent me here."

"Did they keep the light on in your cell all night?"

"Yes, they did. But what has that got to do with it?" I asked in surprise.

"It accounts for the milk in the cocoanut," he replied. "It shows that Dr. Scott sent you here because he thinks that you are just the sort of man to attempt to commit suicide, and he wants to soften your fall for you as much as possible so as to prevent your getting the idea

into your head. The light is left on in your cell so that the night warder may keep a very strict watch on you."

If that was really Dr. Scott's reason for sending me to hospital—and I myself believe that it was—it does little credit to his powers of observation, inasmuch as I am a man of very sanguine temperament, and about the very last man in the world to dream of self-destruction. It goes to show, though, how very careful he was in looking after the prisoners committed to his professional care.

After exercise we prisoners who belonged to the Church of England were taken up into one of the association wards where we sat round the table for a quarter of an hour while the prison chaplain talked to us. It was a very perfunctory performance, and I felt sorry for the poor old parson, who went through with it as if he recognized the utter futility of it all. He was a terrible driveller was that particular prison chaplain, and it was a positive infliction to sit under him at chapel; but there was a stalwart, manly young parson who used sometimes to come and do the prison chaplain's duty, and made a practice of talking very straight to the prisoners. He didn't worry us with points of

doctrine, and his sermons might have done duty in any denomination: but he preached the gospel of "do as you'd have others do to you" to such purpose that a man who owned to having got his living by thieving all his life from boyhood upwards told me that after the parson's sermon he couldn't help fancying himself in the position of a man who had been robbed, and that he was convinced that thieving was about as mean and unmanly a game as the parson had said it was. That parson was not a prison chaplain at all—I rather fancy that he was the incumbent of some church in the vicinity of the prison—but it is a real pity that he is not in the prison service in place of one of the many inefficient drones who are. I don't say that all prison chaplains, or even a majority of them, are round pegs in square holes—my experience of them would not justify my making such an assertion—but as three out of the four prison chaplains I came in contact with were certainly and palpably out of place in a prison, it is evident that these officers are not so carefully selected as they ought to be.

When the Sunday dinner came along, I was agreeably surprised to find that it was a really well-cooked and tasty meal, which I could eat to

the last scrap and thoroughly enjoy. It consisted of five ounces of roasted meat, swimming in delicious gravy, a couple of large potatoes boiled in their jackets, some tender cabbage, and a six-ounce loaf of white bread.

It was a long stretch between dinner and tea —bread and butter with tea as at breakfast—but I got through it comfortably enough by the aid of my book, and it was a longer stretch still between tea at about half-past three and bedtime at eight; but I was thoroughly interested in William Black's fine yachting novel, and bedtime came rather sooner than I was ready for it.

Next morning, before breakfast, the medicine warder served me with a dose of cascara, and I had the dose repeated every morning while I remained in hospital. The only other medicine I had while in hospital was one dose of quinine, which I asked Dr. Scott for when I had been there for about a week, and rather got his back up by my clumsy way of demanding it.

"Could I have a dose of quinine—fifteen grains?" I asked him one morning when he was paying me his usual duty visit.

"Do you take me for an apothecary's boy?" he asked with some asperity. "If you'll tell me

what is the matter, I'll prescribe for you, but I'm hanged if you're going to doctor yourself here, if you are fool enough to do it outside."

Then I explained, as I ought to have done before asking for the stuff, that I was subject to attacks of malaria, and that when I felt one coming on I more often than not choked it off by taking fifteen grains of quinine.

"That's all right," he said in a mollified tone. "You may have the quinine with pleasure; but remember in future that you should never start a consultation with a medical man by telling him how to treat you."

CHAPTER VIII

IDENTIFICATION

AFTER breakfast on the Monday morning the open iron grating that served as a cell door in the day time was unlocked by a warder from the prison proper, who tersely bade me "Come on."

"What's on?" I asked, as we crossed the prison yard.

"Nothing much," he replied good-humouredly. "We're only going to see if you are an old pal of ours in disguise."

He took me to a room in the reception ward where, lying on a table, were a plate of polished copper about a foot long and six inches wide mounted on a block of wood, a roller made of printers' inking composition, an inking slab, and some forms printed on white foolscap.

"Are your hands clean?" he asked.

"Quite," I replied, showing them.

"Very well, then, we'll proceed to take your sign-manual," he said as he rubbed the inked

roller vigorously over the copper-plate until it showed a shiny black surface.

When he had inked the plate to his satisfaction, he took hold of my right hand by the wrist with one hand, and with the other gently rolled my thumb from side to side, first on the inked slab and then on a ruled space on one of the white forms, making not an ordinary thumb print, as is generally represented in newspaper articles on finger-prints, but a sort of square impression that showed the lines at the side of the thumb as well as those on the front. He repeated this operation with the fingers of my right hand and the thumb and fingers of my left, the markings of the left hand being shown underneath the spaces allotted for the markings on the right. Then I was made to place just the tips of my right-hand fingers simultaneously on the inked slab and transfer them to the paper in spaces ruled out below those which contained the other marks, and, below these again, the simultaneous print of the tips of the fingers of my left hand. Then the form was turned over, and I was directed to sign my name and immediately afterwards make the print of the tip of my right forefinger by the side of the signature. This is a correct account of the way

in which my finger-prints were taken immediately after my arrest and again just before my final discharge from prison, though it does not agree with any published accounts of finger-printing that I have seen, and the prints made by my fingers were not of the same shape as the prints illustrated in the articles on the subject that I have read.

CHAPTER IX

BLACK MARIA AGAIN

ON the day when I was due to appear again at the police-court I was taken over to the reception ward just after the bell rang at six o'clock, and when I got there I found those prisoners who had been wearing prison clothing, changing into their own in the little cells ranged along the reception corridor, while others who were already dressed in their own clothes were standing in line along the corridor.

When we were all assembled, there was a long line of a hundred or more men stretching from one end of the corridor to the other, and a very mixed lot we were. There were men in absolute rags, men in respectable working-man's rig-out, men in morning coats and billycock hats, men in reach-me-down lounge suits, and men in lounge suits bearing the stamp of Savile Row and Conduit Street, men in irreproachable frock-coat suits and tall hats, and one man in the wreck of a swell evening-dress suit.

There were men whose faces bore the imprint of great mental anguish, and other men who seemed to be taking the proceedings as a huge joke.

As soon as the line was properly formed, the order " pull up your trousers and waistcoats " was bellowed out by three or four officers at the same time. Then a warder passed along the line with a lighted taper in his hand, and closely inspected the socks and underclothing each man was wearing to make sure that none of the thieves were exercising their profession on the prison underclothing; the men who had been wearing their own clothing, and never having had possession of any garments belonging to the prison, being examined the same as the others.

Then breakfast was served out and eaten by the men as they stood in their places, and after that the property each man had brought in was handed to him and his signature taken for it.

The chief warder now appeared on the scene, bearing in his hand the blue commitment papers relating to the prisoners due for court that morning.

His particular job on this occasion was to make sure that the men who were leaving the prison

were actually those named in the commitment papers, and his way of doing this was to pass down the line and ask each man his name and the offence with which he was charged, checking the answers by the commitment paper.

On this morning there was a little foreign-looking man standing next but one to me in the line. When the chief warder came to him and asked his name, he simply shook his head and smiled, though I had heard him speaking to the man next to me in broken English not five minutes before.

"What's your name, and what are you in for?" shouted the chief warder, as if he were convinced that English yelled is easier to understand than English spoken.

The man gesticulated furiously, shook his head, and volubly declared in Italian that he did not understand.

"He can speak English right enough," said a warder. "I expect that he's an old hand at this game."

"I neva watyoucalla pinched before," said the Italian indignantly, betrayed into finding his English.

"You understood him well enough then," said the chief warder chaffingly. "Shall I ask

him to ask you your name and what you are in for?"

"Neva watyoucalla pinched before," reiterated the man sullenly.

"Well, you're jolly well pinched now, if this is your start," said the chief grimly. "Forgery of banknotes for use in the kingdom of Italy," is what you're pinched for, and it looks like keeping you pinched for a few years."

"Eet ees my brothaire; 'e do the banknote, an' me, I get whatyoucalla pinched," wailed the foreigner.

"You can tell that to the magistrate—or the marines," said the chief warder as he passed on, apparently satisfied that he had got the man named in the commitment right enough, and that it was not worth while wasting any more time in trying to get him to answer questions as to his name and offence.

I had a ragged-looking tramp sort of a man on one side of me, and on the other there was standing a very well-dressed young man who had on a new pair of patent-leather boots. The man with the patents had a very small, well-shaped foot, while the tramp, who was wearing a pair of leaky crabshells, would have had to do a bit of squeezing to get his tootsies into a pair

of number twelve-size bluchers. The tramp couldn't take his eyes off the dainty footgear, and after looking at them longingly for a considerable time, he leaned over me and said to the swell—

"Yer 'aven't got yer old boots ter give away, 'ev yer, mister?"

The tramp was in deadly earnest, but the swell evidently thought he was being chaffed, and answered very superciliously.

"Yer don't need ter give yerself any airs 'ere, mister," retorted the tramp in an aggrieved tone. "If the King 'isself, Gord bless 'im, was a standing in this 'ere line, 'e wouldn't be no better nor I am, an' I don't b'leeve as 'e'd think as 'e was either. Tork about swells! why, I've stood in this 'ere line with bigger swells nor you ever knowed 'ow ter be. Why, I've stood in this line next ter Edwards the Bermon'sey murd'rer, an' Chapman, the man as was supposed ter've pizzened about six wives."

This settled the swell and he retired hurt.

When we had been hanging about the corridor for something like two hours, our dinner —an eight-ounce brown loaf with five ounces of preserved meat—was handed to us, and we

were formed up in squads according to the court we were for.

I found that the swell with the patents was for Bow Street like myself, and as we were going out to get into the police-van, he nudged me and told me to get into one of the cells nearest the door. I thought that it would be a good thing to get near the door myself, as one can then see something of what is going on in the streets ; but as I was appropriating one of the cells, the sergeant in charge of the van ordered me to move further up. "It's all right," whispered the swell to the sergeant, and pushed me into the cell, the sergeant making no objection.

When we were outside the prison gates, the sergeant produced a packet of cigarettes and a box of matches and handed them to the swell, who politely passed them on to me to help myself first. When I had taken one and lighted it, he signed to me to pass it out to my next-door neighbour, and in this way the cigarettes and the matches travelled all round the van until what was left of them came to the owner again. Then he selected one himself and offered one to the police sergeant, so that in ten minutes time after the van had left the prison

everybody in it was smoking. Whether this smoking in police-vans is against regulations or not I never inquired; but I found it to be a common practice, and it certainly did no harm to anybody.

CHAPTER X

BOW STREET

ON arrival at Bow Street the swell and myself were put into the same cell, and with us were two men, a postman and his brother-in-law, who were under remand for extensive post-office robberies. The putting of these two men together in one cell was a good illustration of the wooden-headed system of dealing with prisoners when under remand. At Brixton prisoners who are in the same case are rigourously kept apart in the prison itself, and no prisoner is supposed to be allowed to address even a single word to another prisoner; yet when they are brought down to the police court, prisoners may talk with one another as much as they please, and accomplices are even put together, as these two were, in the same cell. There does not seem to me to be any adequate reason why unconvicted and presumably innocent men should be subjected to practically the same rules at Brixton as govern convicted prisoners;

but if there is any reason for the silent system at Brixton, that reason should surely hold good at the police-court. If, on the other hand, there is no harm in prisoners being allowed unrestrained communication at the police court, what harm could there be in their being allowed to talk to one another at Brixton?

The case of this postman was also an instance of a systematic thief himself supplying the clue that put justice on his track. He had been looting letters for years, and his method of working was so ingenious that it was almost any odds that he would never have been suspected even if he hadn't started flinging money about as if he had the lease of a private mint. This was bound to attract attention in the post-office, as in this service a man who is thought to be spending more than his official income is always an object of suspicion, and he was closely watched, with the result that he and his brother-in-law, who was not connected with the post-office, were found to be the parties who had been baffling the post-office detective staff for many years.

I couldn't help thinking that it was a bit hard on the brother-in-law, for he had done nothing to give the game away, and had, moreover, often

remonstrated with the other as to the danger of being seen to be in possession of money. From their conversation when in the cell with me there was no room for doubt that it was the postman was the leading spirit, and that the brother-in-law had simply been drawn in by him owing to the necessity of having some one to travel all over the country to cash stolen cheques over the counters of the banks they were drawn upon. The magistrate, too, appeared to be of the opinion that the brother-in-law was the less guilty of the two, for he admitted him to bail eventually, while refusing to take bail for the postman. The judge who tried the case at the Old Bailey, however, by some process of reasoning not easy to follow, came to the conclusion that the brother-in-law was the more guilty and gave him six months more than he gave the postman.

The gentleman with the patent-leather boots turned out to be an ex-officer of yeomanry who had served in South Africa. He had served three months' imprisonment for obtaining money by means of a worthless cheque, and had been met on his discharge from prison by a detective who had arrested him upon another charge of the same nature. The circumstances in each case were exactly similar: he had a banking account,

but there was not sufficient credit in it to meet either of the cheques, for which he had obtained actual cash. The Bow Street magistrate held that there was not sufficient evidence of criminal intent, although he knew that another magistrate had convicted him under circumstances exactly parallel, and he was discharged after being kept in Brixton without bail for a fortnight. Which magistrate was right—the one who convicted him or the one who discharged him? The whole thing was a lottery in which he drew one prize and one blank.

He was a good sort, was this ex-yeomanry officer. Amid the surprise at his release, which was totally unexpected—how could he expect it when he had been convicted before in a case exactly similar?—and the congratulations of his friends, he found time to think of me, and came back to the cell as a visitor bringing a huge pork-pie, a large bottle of Bass, a packet of cigarettes, a box of matches, and half a sovereign which he pressed upon me as a loan. He quite forgot to give any address, and I never knew his name, so that half-sovereign remains on loan to this very day. I have a kindly feeling in my heart for that ex-yeomanry officer, and would think it a great bit of luck to find myself at his elbow some time

when he was feeling that he was greatly in need of a friend.

I was alone in the cell when he brought me these things, so there was nobody to share them with. The beer presented no difficulty, and it would be easy to get rid of the cigarettes in the van going back to Brixton; but having just finished my brown bread and preserved meat, I was not then in a humour to attack the pork-pie, and decided to keep it for supper when I got to Brixton.

As all sorts of eatables are allowed to be sent into the prison for the consumption of prisoners, it never entered my head that any objection would be made to the pie; but I was mistaken, and when I got to the search-room that evening I was given the option of standing there, naked as I was, and eating it then or leaving it behind me. I left it behind me, hoping that it would make the warders ill.

These long court days—there was an interval of about fourteen hours between our leaving our cells in the morning and getting back to them at night—are very trying, and the having to go through all the formalities on readmission, just the same as a new comer, seems to be just wanton red-tape and nothing less. I had six of

these days during my police court purgatory, and I look back upon them as the six worst days in my whole period of imprisonment.

I was sent back to hospital again on this occasion, and also on the next; but when I was returned to Brixton on my fourth remand, I was put in the general prison, in the "B," or old, block, which used to form part of the old military prison.

While I was in the hospital the principal warder in charge there remonstrated with me very earnestly, but very suavely, on what he called my beastly habit of washing myself in the dinner-time as well as in the morning. It spoiled the look of the tin washbowl for the rest of the day, he said, and seriously affected his reputation for keeping a clean and tidy hospital. He was a very nice chap was that principal warder, and I hated to cause him pain, so I did without my middle-day wash after this while I remained in hospital; but I reverted to the bad habit when I got into the prison proper, and even persisted in it during the whole term of my sentence without any other warder taking exception to it.

CHAPTER XI

REMAND DIET

A PRISONER on remand or awaiting trial may provide his own food if he likes, and a warder goes round the cells every morning to take the names of those who wish to purchase food and newspapers. No money passes on these occasions, for a prisoner's money is taken from him on entrance, but the prisoner signs a form authorizing the governor to take the amount from the sum belonging to the prisoner in his hands. The same procedure is adopted when a prisoner desires a shave, the charge for which is threepence—an outside barber attending in the prison every morning for the purpose of shaving and cutting the hair of any prisoners who desire his services. The morning newspapers are not served out to the prisoners until after dinner, though why this delay should be a matter of regulation I cannot imagine.

I didn't buy any food when in the prison—in fact, it is only a small number of the prisoners

who do—and after leaving the hospital I was on ordinary prison diet, the same as is given to debtors and men serving sentences in the second division. This diet consists of—Breakfast: an eight-ounce brown loaf and a pint of tea. Supper: an eight-ounce brown loaf and a pint of good ship's cocoa with a layer of oil floating on top of it. Dinner on Mondays: two ounces of bacon fat, ten ounces of haricot beans that have been boiled with the bacon, six ounces brown bread, and twelve ounces potatoes boiled in their jackets. Dinner on Tuesdays and Fridays: a pint of excellent pea-soup, bread and potatoes as before. Dinner on Wednesdays and Saturdays: twelve ounces plain suet pudding, made of brown flour, potatoes and bread as before, Dinner on Thursdays: five ounces of boiled fresh beef with about a quarter of a pint of the liquor it was boiled in, bread and potatoes as before. Dinner on Sundays: five ounces preserved meat, bread and potatoes as before. Jews are given preserved meat on Mondays also.

This diet does not err on the side of luxury, and few people get used to it during their stay at Brixton if they happen to be making their first acquaintance with it; but it is wholesome enough, and I managed to eat what I

wanted of it without feeling that I was doing anything more unpleasant than roughing it a bit.

A prisoner on remand or awaiting trial may write one letter every day that Government will pay the postage of, and he may send as many more as he likes provided that he either pays the postage himself or is willing for them to be posted unstamped. There is no restriction on the number of letters he may receive. Every letter, whether going out or coming in, is read by the prison authorities, and in many cases copies of them are taken and supplied to the prosecution. This was done in my case, and it appeared to me to be a glaringly unfair proceeding, because the police were thereby made acquainted with every step I was taking in my defence, and the not over-scrupulous detectives were able, in two cases at least, to influence people whom I had asked to give evidence in my behalf to give evidence against me. A prisoner is not allowed to write any letter upon any other paper than that bearing the usual official heading.

Prisoners at Brixton may be visited any afternoon except Saturday and Sunday, the interviews taking place in compartments divided in the centre by a strong wire netting through

which it is impossible to pass any article, however small. For interviews with solicitors there are special rooms where prisoner and solicitor can discuss their business seated opposite one another at a table. Even here they are overlooked by a warder, for the upper parts of these interview-rooms are of glass; but he cannot hear the conversation. A solicitor succeeded in getting an interview with me in one of these rooms for the purpose of dunning me for an account owing to a client of his, which goes to show that the authorities are not so careful as might be expected.

In the older part of Brixton prison the cells and the cell furniture are exactly the same as in an ordinary prison; but in the new part the cell windows are larger and are not placed too high up for one to stand at and look out; indeed, on one side of the top floor of this new block a prisoner can stand at the window and see what is going on in the streets beyond the walls. It is in this part of the prison that the majority of the "private cells" are situated, for the use of which prisoners pay half a crown a week. The difference only consists in the cell being furnished with a chair, a table, a strip of matting, and a washstand; but the occupant of a private cell

does not have to do his own cleaning, which is done for him by one of the other prisoners. All the cells in the new block have spring mattresses which fold up against the wall in the day-time, while in the old block the bed is the ordinary prison plank and coir-fibre mattress. The cells in the new part are altogether more desirable and comfortable than the old ones, and prisoners consider themselves favoured if they are posted to them. I had to thank Dr. Scott for getting there myself. The principal warder had put me in one of the least desirable cells on the ground floor of the old block, where Dr. Scott found me next morning when he looked me up to ask me how I was, and promptly ordered my removal to the new block.

I have given these minute particulars about life in Brixton because I do not think they have ever appeared in print before, and are of considerable public interest.

During my stay at Brixton I formed the opinion that remanded prisoners are treated with quite an unnecessary amount of severity. The discipline is so strict as to amount to a considerable punishment—as a matter of fact, I felt more uncomfortable while I was in the prison proper at Brixton than I did at any time when I was serving my

sentence—and it appears to me that there is no justification for punishing men who are innocent in the eyes of the law. Further—and this is an even more serious matter—the restrictions considerably hamper a prisoner in the preparation of his defence and add enormously to the unfair advantages possessed and taken by the public prosecutor.

CHAPTER XII

EN ROUTE FOR THE OLD BAILEY

THERE was an air of satisfaction, almost of gaiety even, about almost every one of the eighty or ninety prisoners who were assembled in one of the corridors of the prison at Brixton on the Monday morning fixed for the opening of the Old Bailey Sessions at which I was tried. Everybody seemed to be glad that the long period of suspense was approaching its end and that in a few more hours the process of expiation would commence. One man in the crowd, in default of something like a miracle being worked in his favour, had only a matter of three weeks to live, and was aware of it; yet this murderer, whose guilt was patent and whose condemnation was certain, had a smile on his face as he furtively chatted with the man standing next to him, and to look at him one would imagine that he had nothing on his mind more serious than the little worries that fall to the lot of the luckiest of us.

He was not the only murderer there. There was another one, a miserable undersized man, who had murdered his own two little boys for no better reason than that he was out of work. This murderer was light-hearted even to hilarity, and was several times checked by the warder for laughing loudly. The jury in his case found that he was of unsound mind, and in all likelihood this was a right and proper verdict; for it is difficult to believe that a sane man would kill his own little children of whom he was very fond. He was, however, arguing very sanely about money matters with the warder who had charge of this department on the last occasion of my seeing him.

Standing next to me was a solicitor who had sold some houses belonging to a widow woman without her authority, and stuck to the proceeds. I asked him how he expected to come out of the affair, and he answered laconically: "Five years." I thought he deserved all that, but I was not rude enough to tell him so. "I might have got off with three," he said, "but my case is in the judge's list, and the judge is Phillimore, who is certain to give me every day I am entitled to."

"How much do you think I'll get?" I asked. "You've read my case, haven't you?"

"They don't seem to have much of a case against you as far as I can see," he rejoined, "and I should say that you've got a good chance of getting off."

"What about me?" asked a smart-looking sailor-like man, who was standing on my other hand. "I'm in for that railway robbery, you know."

"Twenty years will be your dose for a cert," said the solicitor.

"That's what I'm expecting," said the sailor simply. "It'll be about the softest twenty years that has ever been earned," he continued after a pause. "I'd no more idea of robbing anybody when I got into that train than I had of cutting my throat, and I'm not one of the sort to cut my throat either. But I was broke to the world, and I couldn't stand the sight of that ship's cable watchchain of his. If he'd have let me have the chain he wouldn't have been hurt; but the silly fool put up a fight, and then I bashed him without exactly knowing what I was doing."

"That's the trouble with us all—doing things without thinking," said the solicitor drily. "There's precious few of this lot would be standing here now, waiting for the Black Maria, who would be here if we'd thought about what

we were about to do before we did it. All the gaols are full of people who won't look ahead."

"I'll bet they learn to look ahead quick enough when they get there," said the sailor. "I know I shall."

"I've been looking ahead already," remarked the man on the other side of the solicitor, "I've paid back the eleven hundred pounds they say I've no right to, though in taking it I was only doing what people before me did."

This man was an official of the City of London Corporation, and his offence was the obtaining of money from contractors by false representations.

"I think that I'd have stuck to that money," said the solicitor. "I hope that you won't be sorry for parting with it, but I expect you will be. I don't suppose that you'd have got more than six months in the second division if you'd have stuck to the lot, and you'll hardly get less now."

"I don't know about that," said the official confidently; "a detective-sergeant came up here to me the other day and told me that I'd be let down very easy indeed if the money was paid back, though he owned that he wasn't authorised to tell me so."

"You'll know better presently than to believe what a detective tells you in circumstances like that," said the solicitor grimly. "I expect that you'll be handicapping that detective to give Ananias a stone before the week's out."

I didn't hear any more of the conversation, as a warder came up and told me to join a group standing some distance away. This lot stood still while the other prisoners were strung together in batches, by very bright chains passing through handcuffs, and stowed away in covered wagonettes. There was no necessity to handcuff and chain my batch as we had been selected to go down in the two Black Marias.

Standing by the steps of the prison-van to see us safely inside was the comfortable-looking chief warder, who literally beamed on us after the manner of the landlord of an hotel when seeing off some particularly distinguished and satisfactory customer.

As I stepped past him I carried the hotel parallel a bit further by thanking him, as gracefully as I knew how, for his kindness and courtesy to me whilst I had been under his charge, and he acknowledged my thanks by a bow and a smile that suggested that he considered my remarks a condescension on my part

and was grateful. He was a most courtier-like and urbane gentleman, was that chief warder, and I could fancy him, in his previous position at Newgate, metaphorically strewing the pathway to the scaffold with roses.

I only once asked him a favour, and then I got a refusal, but the refusal was so charmingly conveyed that I left his office with the distinct feeling that I was under a great obligation to him. It was only a small favour that I was asking of him, and it was hard to believe that it was a case of couldn't and not wouldn't; but when he told me that he couldn't grant it I implicitly believed him, and felt sorry for him on account of his so much wanting to grant the favour and not being able to do it. He was acting-governor at Brixton when the time approached for my trial at the Central Criminal Court, and as my boots had not been cleaned for six weeks, I made an official application to him to either allow me to have a set of boot-brushes sent in or to have a set lent me from the prison stores so that I could put a shine on my boots for my trial.

"What on earth do you want clean boots at your trial for?" he asked in a surprised tone. "Nobody will be able to see your feet as you

stand in the dock—it's not a railed dock at the Old Bailey."

I explained that it made no difference that my feet could not be seen: it was not for the look that I wanted clean boots but for the feel. Any man can feel, I told him, that he has got dirty boots on, even if he cannot see them at all, and that sort of feeling is utterly destructive of all self-confidence, as it carries conviction to the mind of the feeler that he is only a poor sort of creature. How did he expect, I asked, that I could conduct my defence properly if he sent me to court with dirty boots.

I don't suppose that he had ever known what it was to wear a pair of dirty boots, and so he can hardly have understood my feelings; but he was very sympathetic for all that and expressed his regret that I had not thought to raise the question a month previously when I might have petitioned the Home Secretary to allow me to have my boots blacked. Unfortunately the regulations did not say anything about boot-brushes, and so he was powerless to help me, much as he would like to do so. Did I think that dubbing would serve my purpose?

I shook my head dejectedly, and he dismissed me with a sigh of sympathy.

The chief warder would probably consider this boot-brush episode somewhat overdrawn, and very likely it is so, if the incident be looked at from the chief warder's point of view; but from my point of view it is absolutely true to actual fact. I did appear at the Central Criminal Court in boots that had not been cleaned for something like seven weeks, and I ascribe my hang-dog appearance in the dock to this cause and not to the workings of a guilty conscience. But let me get on with the main story.

CHAPTER XIII

THE OLD BAILEY CELLS

WHEN the vans had driven into the courtyard of the Old Bailey—I was tried at the old building—and the gates were securely fastened behind them, we were let out and shepherded into a number of boxes in the basement. These waiting-cells were apparently designed for the accommodation of one person only, but two or three prisoners were put into each. The cells were so extremely dirty and the dust lay so thickly all over them that I formed the opinion that they could not have been cleaned for many months at least.

I had two companions in my cell, both of them burglars and in for the same job. Anybody more unlike the "cracksman" as he is pictured in the public mind it would be impossible to imagine.

If there is anything in the theories put forward by criminologists of the Lombroso type they ought to have looked forbidding at least;

but they were quite nice and innocent-looking persons, whose faces would have added to the respectable appearance of any assemblage of the minor clergy. And they had both of them had plenty of experience that ought to have left the stamp of crime upon their features, if there be any such stamp in real life, for both of them had previously served terms of penal servitude for the same class of offence, and frankly admitted that they had been thieves of sorts from their earliest boyhood.

The elder of them—he could hardly been more than thirty, I thought—had a pair of velvety brown eyes, in the depths of which I could read nothing but truth, honesty, and good-fellowship as they looked straight and unashamed into mine. I asked myself whether a man like this could possibly be a thief by nature, and I quickly came to the conclusion that it was not innate depravity but his education and his surroundings that had made him what he was.

"You don't look at all like my idea of a burglar," I remarked.

"Don't I?" he said, showing a perfect set of white teeth in a genial grin. "What should you take me for then: a parson out of uniform or a bank manager?"

"You certainly wouldn't make a bad-looking clergyman if you dressed the part," said I; "but tell me, how did you come to drift into this sort of game?"

"Didn't drift into it at all, I was brought up to it. My old man was in the line and he learned me the trade. My mate here 'drifted' into it the same way."

"It doesn't seem to be much of a trade," I retorted, "if nobody does any better at it than you two seem to have done."

"It's a dead cert that it ain't what it useter be, mister," he replied.

"Police smarter than they used to be, eh?"

"Oh, it ain't the police, bless ye! *They* ain't learnt much since the days of Jonathan Wild in the way of interferin' with screwsmen when they're actually at work. What beats the game now is the perishin' hardship of gettin' rid of the stuff after you've bagged it. I've never been copped on the job yet, and ain't much afraid as I ever shall be. Every time as I've been pinched I've been rounded on by somebody over the making away with the loot. There ain't no real dependable fences nowadays like there used to be, and them as *are* open don't want to touch anythin' but 'sparks' (precious stones) and

meltin' pot stuff. In my old man's time it was easy enough to find a market for a most anythin' as you could pick up, but you can hardly place anythin' now if it can be swore to."

This interesting conversation was put an end to by a warder banging open the door and inviting me to come outside with the remark that I would be learning enough to get me a lagging at some future time if I stayed there much longer.

"All right, stand there with your face to the wall," he said, as I was following him on the supposition that he was going to place me in another cell.

I stood with my toes close to the wall and my nose almost touching the grimy whitewash while he crept from door to door and listened to the conversation going on inside the cells. Whether he was doing this out of mere curiosity or on the hunt for evidence, I don't know; but it presently appeared that the talk in my cell was not the reason for my being fetched out, as another warder came along and took me to a room where I found the detective sergeant in charge of my case.

CHAPTER XIV

AN UNEXPECTED CHARGE

"HERE is a statement of additional evidence we are going to call," said the sergeant cheerfully, as he handed me a sheet of blue foolscap. "I wish you well, as you know, and if you will let me give you a tip that will do you some good you will plead "Guilty." I'll say what I can for you, and I reckon that you won't get half the dose that'll be served out to you if you are found "Guilty" by the jury.

"But I don't think that I shall be found 'Guilty,'" I retorted.

"Well, I hope you won't; but I'm sure you will," he rejoined coolly. "We've got a second string in the shape of charges under the Bankruptcy Act in respect of Grey and Green's debts, if you should happen to wriggle out of the charge you were arrested on."

This was the first I had heard of any charge other than that on which I had been arrested and formally committed for trial, and for the moment

I could hardly believe that he was speaking the truth. It seemed to me to be an utterly impossible thing that English justice could permit of a man being brought to face a charge of which he had been given no intimation until the very moment he was called upon to plead to it. How in the name of common fairness could I hope to rebut such a charge? It must seem incredible to all fair-minded men who are not lawyers that the public prosecutor would take such an unfair advantage of a prisoner as to indict him, without his knowledge, for a crime that was not specifically brought against him during the police court investigation. And the judge assured me that it is perfectly legal to do this, and, on learning that my bankruptcy had been proved at the police court, overruled my objection to the charges. The appearance of injustice was further heightened by the fact that neither of the nominal prosecutors in these cases preferred any complaint against me, and their evidence at the police court was distinctly favourable to me. The public prosecutor, however, subpoena'd them to attend the Old Bailey, where they again stated that they did not wish to bring any charge against me, though they admitted, in reply to the prosecuting

counsel, that I had not specifically informed them that I was an undischarged bankrupt before obtaining credit from them. In cross-examination by me they expressed the opinion that I would have paid them if I had been let alone, and that they still thought that I would pay them at some future time. I was proceeding with the cross-examination on these lines when the judge interrupted me to say that it would not be any answer to the charge if I could prove that I had already paid them: once the offence was committed it remained an offence, whether the debt was liquidated or not.

It was on these two charges that I was eventually convicted, the charge on which I was originally arrested failing utterly. Yes, I served eighteen months' imprisonment for wrongs done to two men who didn't think that I had wronged them at all until my assets were destroyed by the prosecution and I was thus prevented from paying them the money due to them. It is very probable that had I been given notice of the charge I might have brought evidence which would have prevented the jury convicting me at all.

Had I been financially strong enough to have obtained the assistance of solicitor and counsel,

it is possible that a copy of the indictment would have been furnished to them before the day of trial—indeed, there may be some way in which a prisoner can get a copy himself if he knows the ropes; but I was compelled to defend myself because the police had taken possession of all my assets, and I knew nothing of the procedure of the courts. Surely, in common fairness, every prisoner should be supplied with a copy of the indictment so that he may know, some days in advance of his trial, what are the charges he has to meet.

Let me say, right here, that I am not whining about my sentence, though I have doubts as to the even-handedness of the justice that metes out to a man in my position, convicted for the first time of the most venial of misdemeanours, the same punishment as is commonly awarded on a second conviction for burglary. I must admit that when all has been said in my favour that can be said, even by myself, the fact remains that I was certainly guilty of criminal carelessness in dealing with other people's money, as well as with my own, and that I cannot truthfully say that I did not morally merit all the punishment that came my way—even if the punishment had been real and not farcical.

CHAPTER XV

MY PREDECESSORS

I HAVE anticipated somewhat by discussing my trial and sentence before being called upon to plead, but the remarks fit in better after the interview with the detective than they would if put in their natural order.

When I got back to the cells after my interview with the detective, I found all the prisoners standing in line and being told off into batches according to the courts in which they were to be tried.

After this sorting out had been completed, we were taken upstairs to other cells large enough to contain a dozen or more prisoners each. These cells had chalked on the doors the name of the court in which the inmates were to be tried, thus: "New Court" "Old Court" "Third Court" and "Fourth Court."

I found myself in the cell marked "Third Court," in company with thirteen others. I had not spoken to any one of the thirteen previously,

nor noticed any of them at Brixton, but in five minutes after being locked up together we were all chatting away as if we were old acquaintances. The first question that one prisoner asks another at Brixton, or anywhere else where they may chance to meet before trial, is: "What are you in for?" After sentence, this question comes second, if asked at all, giving place to: "What are you doing?" When these questions are answered, friendly relations are at once established and confidences are exchanged that the police would sometimes be very glad to hear. It may be that the police take full advantage of this want of reticence among the criminal classes by judiciously planting a disguised detective among prisoners here and there; but if they do, I am sure that they do not get credit from the criminal classes for doing it. Criminals of all kinds with whom I was brought into association appeared to have a very poor opinion of the police, and ascribed all their successes in the detection of crime to "information received"; but there was one man among my thirteen companions who certainly could not accuse the detectives of want of sharpness. He was described as a doctor of medicine and was certainly a very well-educated man, but, according to the police, he had for some

years devoted himself to the practice of scientific forgery. He was now charged with the forgery of a cheque for six hundred pounds, the cash for which he had obtained and made away with, and he was suspected, but not charged, owing to want of proof, of a long string of successful operations of the same nature. How the police came to get on to his track at last did not transpire; but it was evident that the information in their hands was not sufficient to warrant his arrest, for when they did arrest him so that they might search him and his abode for the evidence they were in need of, it was on a minor charge which, he insisted, was deliberately got up by the police. Like most clever criminals he wasn't quite so careful in small things as he ought to have been for his own safety, and when he was searched at the police station on being taken in on the minor charge, there was found upon him sufficient evidence to warrant his detention for the far graver offence for which he was now to stand his trial. Next morning at the police court the minor charge, which the police admitted could not be substantiated, was withdrawn, and he was charged with forgery, being remanded without any evidence being given. At the next hearing, the police having in the meanwhile found his

lodgings and searched them, there was plenty of evidence, and here he was at the Old Bailey with such a strong case against him that he looked upon his conviction as a certainty. He was very bitter against the police on account of what he called their "unsportsmanlike" proceedings, and I do not think that there can be any doubt that in his case they did commit a premeditated wrong on him in order that the ends of justice might be served. How far the police are justified in themselves breaking the law in order that law-breakers may be brought to reckoning I do not pretend to be able to say; but that they frequently do break the law and violate the liberty of the subject when they have reason to believe that by doing so they can obtain evidence against a suspect I do not entertain any doubt whatever—I have heard too much about police methods from all kinds of prisoners to leave any room for doubt on this particular point.

This doctor—he probably wasn't entitled to the designation—got seven years, I think, and as he was supposed to have netted many thousands of pounds, he got off very lightly indeed in comparison with two other forgers who were also in my batch. One of these got five years for forging a cheque for six pounds, and the

other was sentenced to three years for forging an order for the delivery of goods valued at sixteen shillings. Both these men pleaded "guilty" and correctly forecasted their sentences, a thing that professional criminals often succeed in doing.

"Why are you going to plead 'guilty'?" I asked the man who got five years. "Surely there is *some* chance of your getting off."

"That's just it," he replied. "I'm going to plead 'guilty' because I want to make sure of not getting off."

"What!" I ejaculated in amazement. "Do you seriously mean to tell me that you want to go to penal servitude?"

"Yes I do," he replied calmly, "and so would you if you was in my place. I've got an incurable disease that kept me in hospital pretty near all of my last lagging, and it's worse now. I shall likely enough be in hospital all the time I'm doing my six months' 'separates,' and if I'm alive after they're over I shall be sent to Parkhurst in the Isle of Wight. You don't know, of course, but you can take it from me that I shall be more comfortable and better off in every way at Parkhurst than I should be in any workhouse infirmary, and I'm so situated that it must be

one or the other. No, I haven't many years to live, and I'm going to die as a convict if I can manage it."

It struck me with horror to hear this man calmly telling me that he hoped to lie in a convict's grave, and I shuddered as I realized the significance of his words. What a horrible commentary on the time-honoured saying that honesty is the best policy! He was not by any means the only man I heard talk in the same strain during my prison life.

CHAPTER XVI

FURTHER POSTPONEMENT

IN the afternoon, after a dinner consisting of an eight-ounce brown loaf and five ounces of preserved meat, we were all taken up a passage and formed up in a row at the foot of a flight of stairs. After a wait of about an hour, we were called up this flight of steps one by one by a warder stationed at the top. When I was called up in my turn, I found myself in the dock and facing the judge, who, in black gown and barrister's wig, sat perched with bent back at a desk below and to the right of the dais, which is, I believe, the seat of the Lord Mayor, who is the nominal president of the Central Criminal Court.

Notwithstanding the gravity of my situation, I could not help thinking that the learned judge looked very much like a grey-headed crow as he sat there quite still and without speaking a word during the whole of the proceedings. I found

out afterwards that he could use his tongue more than a bit when it suited him.

As I advanced to the front of the dock, I saw below me a crowd of barristers with every one of their faces turned my way and, I thought, looking at me expectantly. Again, in the midst of the serious proceedings, I was powerless to prevent my thoughts straying, and this time the subject of them was the problem as to how it could have come about that the bar took rank as a profession suitable for gentlemen. According to my ideas a man who can be hired to destroy another man's reputation is very much like a modern survival of the bravo of the middle ages, and a gentleman must often find his feelings at variance with the performance of the work he is paid to do. What a pitiful story that is of the barrister who, when charged with professional misconduct in taking less than the regulated fee, excused himself by saying that he had taken all that the man had, which could hardly be called unprofessional conduct. How that story has been laughed over, and what a thing it is to laugh about; a man gives up all he has to a "gentleman" as payment for persuading a jury to acquit him of a crime—the said "gentleman" being just as ready, before being

engaged, to take payment for persuading the jury that the said man committed the crime. What work for a gentleman!

A gentleman in ordinary attire, who sat at a desk under that occupied by the judge, now read out the indictment, which occupied many large sheets of paper and a great deal of which I didn't understand at all.

Having finished he said: "Are you 'guilty' or 'not guilty'?"

"Not guilty" I replied.

Then the warder led me to a bench at the back of the dock where those who had already pleaded were sitting, and the next unfortunate was called up. So it went on until all had pleaded, when we were taken downstairs again and the proceedings ended for that day.

At about five o'clock we were given an eight-ounce loaf and about two ounces of cheese, and at about eight the prison-van arrived and took us back to Brixton.

On this occasion there was none of the formality usual on re-entering the prison after being remanded from a police court. We were simply searched in a perfunctory fashion behind screens, and then, after being given a pint of cocoa and a loaf of bread, were locked up in our cells.

CHAPTER XVII

SENTENCED

THE next morning, as soon as we arrived at the court, we were taken direct to the foot of the stairs at the back of the dock. When the court opened, those who had pleaded "guilty" the previous day were called up one by one to receive sentence, and very severe the sentences were.

"The judge ain't on very good terms with his missus, this morning," said the man standing next to me on my right. "It's all a bit of luck is this 'weighing-off' business. If that judge 'ad 'a 'appened ter've been married yesterday instead of fallin' out wi' his Old Dutch this mornin', that chap as 'as just come down would 'a oney got six months instead o' three year."

The prisoner standing next to me on my left was a retired major of the army who was accused of stealing a diamond ring from a jeweller's shop. He, like myself, had had a second charge under the Bankruptcy Act put against him, and, also like

me, was convicted on this charge when the graver one broke down. He has since been convicted a second time—which is ever so much easier than being convicted the first time—and at the time of writing is serving a sentence of eighteen months.

As the sentenced men came down the steps, some crying and some quite unconcerned, and communicated their sentences to us, the major whispered to me—

"If people who plead 'guilty' are given sentences like these, what are we to expect if we are found 'guilty' after making a fight for it?"

Well, we didn't get off easily. The maximum sentence for the offence of which I was convicted is twelve months, and the judge had to give me separate and consecutive sentences on each of the charges to make up the time he thought I deserved.

At last the time came when I stood facing the judge, with the jury in its box on my left front. I was then infected with the common belief that trial by jury is the greatest safeguard of an accused man; but my heart sank as I scanned the faces of the twelve men who were to decide my fate.

There was one whose bloodshot eyes were

bulging out of his head as if he had not only had one wet night but a series of them. I thought as I looked at him that his head must ache far too much for him to give that close attention to my case that it must have if my side of it was to be appreciated. And there was another one with the facial angle of an anthropoid ape. There was hardly an intelligent face in the whole jury, and it did not need a phrenologist to predict that the jury as a whole would take its view of the case from the cleverest advocate. Alas! I was compelled to be my own advocate, in the very circumstances where a man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client, while on the side of the prosecution were three of the ablest lawyers at the criminal bar.

What fairness can there be in a fight of this sort? Just about as much fair play as there would be if a man armed only with his bare fists tried to fight a fully equipped cavalryman on horseback.

Why should it not be the duty of the police and the public prosecutor to search for the truth instead of merely striving for convictions in a partisan spirit. Why, as is unfortunately the case, should they produce all facts that tell against a prisoner and say nothing about facts

within their knowledge that tell in his favour? The police and the public prosecutor are not paid by the public in order that innocent men may be sent to prison, or that guilty ones should be punished more severely than they deserve; but that, I am afraid, is what happens in very many cases, owing to the manner in which Treasury prosecutions are conducted.

A great surprise was in store for me. The leading counsel for the prosecution got up and announced that it had been decided not to proceed with the charge on which I had been arrested and specifically committed for trial, and that he would rely on the charges under the Bankruptcy Act. If this meant anything, the only meaning that could be put upon it was that it was an admission that my arrest and the taking up of the prosecution by the Treasury was recognized to have been a mistake. It would never do to admit that in so many words, though, and so some way had to be found to save the face of the public prosecutor. This way was found, and I was charged and convicted of an offence that the police would never have heard of if I had not been arrested on the other charge.

A man who has to conduct his own defence is placed in a very awkward position. If he is keen,

he is in great danger of being regarded as an impenitent thief, and if he isn't keen, it isn't much use his defending himself at all. A prisoner in such a position has to cover himself with humility as with a garment; he must not let any feelings of indignation show in his manner or his speech, nor must he, above all things, make sarcastic remarks to witnesses. English justice gives nothing to the man who stands up and proudly demands justice as his birthright; the man who wants justice must ask for it meekly and humbly, as if he is craving a boon instead of demanding a right.

In the course of my cross-examination of the witnesses I was several times testily interrupted by the judge, who no doubt thought that I was wasting time, as was probably the case. At last I said to him just as testily—

"I must be allowed to get at my points in my own way, my lord, or it is of no use my going on."

He didn't interrupt any more, but I rather think that I did an extra month or two for that remark.

After I had been found "guilty," the detective who had arrested me and had been in charge of the case all through got into the witness-box

to give me the usual "character," and he painted me as being a very black sheep indeed. In speaking of the business I carried on, he remarked that I "foisted" certain articles on the public.

"What do you mean by that?" I asked him. "Were the goods not worth the money asked for them?"

"I don't say that they weren't; I know nothing about them," was his reply.

"Then why do you use the word 'foisted'? Do you know the meaning of it?"

I got no answer to that question. Another item of his evidence was to the effect that I owed a certain man seventy odd pounds, the truth in this case being that I had an unsatisfied judgment against that man for twelve pounds. If one-half of what that detective said about me were true, I should have deserved a great deal more than I got; but, speaking with the fullest sense of the responsibility attached to making a serious charge against the police, I say emphatically that he didn't make a single statement about me that would have borne sifting. How much my neglect to tip him when I was arrested had to do with this "character" I will not pretend to say—perhaps he believed all he was told by

persons with whom I had had business disputes; he never took the trouble to make inquiries about me from a single person with whom I was on friendly terms.

After I had been sentenced, the judge made an order for the money that had been taken from me to be given up to me. Nothing was said then about the other property of mine that the police had seized; but a few days after I got to prison I was told that the police would hand it over to any one whom I would authorize to receive it.

CHAPTER XVIII

FELLOW PHILOSOPHER

I KNEW the worst now, and very crushing it was; but my fit of depression did not last long, and I was in good spirits again and looking hopefully to the future before I stepped into the prison-van that evening.

Down in the cells I found some of the men who had that day been sentenced in the other courts. There was the corporation official, who was considerably more astonished at his "dose" then I was at mine, for he had got three years' penal servitude instead of six months' second division predicted for him by the defaulting solicitor. There also was the brown-eyed lovable burglar with ten years plus the unexpired portion of his ticket-of-leave to do. He was in very high spirits, and did his level best to cheer up those who were down in the dumps by recommending them to "Cheer up, matey; it ain't 'arf as bad as you think it is. You'll be as 'appy as a bug in a rug before two months is out."

"You've got a pretty severe dose," said I to him.

"Yes," said he laughing. "The old josser said as it was no good givin' me short sentences. Seein' as my last lot was seven years and the lagging afore that was five, I don't think as he's got much to grumble about. If he's satisfied, I am; I shan't have to worry about my 'kip' money for a good many years, an' if I won't get bloaters or 'addicks fer tea I can do without 'em. I don't allus have 'em when I'm out either."

Another of the party had got three years for receiving some sacks of potatoes, knowing them to have been stolen. This man had passed five years in an industrial school and could not read nor write He was very much upset, but not on his own account: he was troubled about how his "missus" was going to get along.

"There's a chap as was sweet on 'er afore she married me," he said, "an' I'm sure as he'd be good to her if she'd go an' live with him while I'm in; but I can 'ardly tell her to go an' live with him, can I?"

"Do you mean to say that you would be willing for your wife to go and live with another man whilst you are in prison?" I asked.

"Yus—why not?" he replied. "It 'ud be

better for her to do that than fer 'er an' the two kids to starve, wouldn't it? Mind yer, I know as she'd come back ter me like a shot when I come out, so my mind's easy enough."

Supposing, reader, that you had seen that paragraph in a novel. Wouldn't you have said that it was an impossible thing? Well, it is not fiction at all, for that paragraph was burnt on my memory when I heard it, and I believe it is here reproduced word for word as the man uttered it.

The remaining occupant of our cell was an elderly man who was in a deplorable state of distress. He wept like an hysterical woman all the time and utterly refused to be comforted.

"Poor chap!" said I to the brown-eyed burglar, "I suppose he's got a heavier sentence than yours."

"Not him," replied the burglar contemptuously; "he's one of the sort that does bold bad things when they're drunk an' howls like a little kid when they're made ter toe the line. The blighter's got six weeks, that's what he's makin' all this row about. He ought ter have a dose of the cat, that's what he wants."

"What did he do, then?" I asked, surprised at the burglar's intolerance.

"Why, he 'ad a few words with his daughter

when he was drunk, an' set his own house afire just to make her sorry fer herself if she got out of it alive. Look at 'im; he seems the right sort to frighten women an' kids, don't he?"

There was only one more addition to the number in our cell before the arrival of the prison-van. This was a man who had been awarded five years for bigamy.

"No more wimmen for me!" he said gloomily. "I've done with 'em as long as I live. I hate the sight of a woman now, I do."

"Cheer up, matey," said the burglar; "you won't be hurt by the sight of one fer three year an' nine months at the least, an' then you'll be glad ter see both them wives o' yours if they 'appen to meet you at the gate coming out."

What a wonderful thing is the elasticity of the human mind! In that prison-van there were two of us who had forfeited decent positions in society which we could never hope to regain, two who were in for a long period of what we then believed to be very severe punishment, two who thought that they were face to face with the worst misfortune that can happen to a man who has been in the habit of sleeping soft and eating daintily. And what were we two doing? Were we sitting moody and silent, tormented by gloomy

thoughts and sad apprehensions? Not a bit of it! We were laughing and chatting more like happy bean-feasters.

The man who had six weeks and myself were the only two in that van who had not been sentenced to penal servitude, and the man with the fleabite sentence of six weeks was the only one who was crying over spilt milk.

The liveliest of the lot was the man who had the heaviest sentence—ten years. He was wearing a brand new overcoat—a really good one—which he offered to give to the dejected man with six weeks, who had none at all.

"Here, stop that howling, mate," he said; "anybody 'ud think as you'd got somethin' to cry about. Here's a coat for you. It's a coat as you'd never be able to get by yourself. I oney got it the week afore I was pinched."

The mournful man shook his head dolefully.

"What! you won't have it?" he cried in astonishment. "They carn't pinch yer fer havin' it—you ain't supposed ter know how I got it."

"I'd—I'd rather not have it, thank you," stammered the mournful man, shrinking from

the proffered coat as if contact with it would do him actual bodily harm.

"Lummy," said his would-be benefactor disgustedly, "I'd rather have my ten stretch than your moon an' a half if I 'ad ter feel as bad about it as you do."

CHAPTER XIX

A PRISONER IN EARNEST

WHEN the door of the van was opened and we were bidden to alight, we found ourselves at the door of the reception-ward of the prison.

We were ushered into a room where there was a bright fire burning, and told to sit in a row on a form facing a table at which a warder sat with a book in front of him.

Presently a khaki-clad prisoner in his shirt-sleeves appeared with a large can of oatmeal porridge and some eight-ounce loaves of brown bread.

"Who sez a late dinner?" he asked in a subdued tone as if he didn't want to disturb the warder sitting at the desk. "This is the way we live here, me boys; ain't you glad as you've come?"

"Ah!" I said somewhat regretfully. "When I got up this morning I thought that I had a

very good chance of dining at Frascati's to-night."

"Frascati's!" said the khaki-clad man with well-simulated scorn. "They ain't got nothin' like this at Frascati's!"

Which was true, anyway.

There was a general snigger at this, which attracted the official attention of the warder who loudly admonished us to "Shut up."

"You're not allowed to laugh here, you know," whispered the man with the porridge-can in a pained tone as he went from one to the other. "If you don't feel as mis'rable here as you ought, you've got to pretend you are."

After we had turned out our pockets, and such of us as had them had divested ourselves of rings and studs, we were ordered to go through into a passage where there was a row of bath cubicles closed by half-doors. Here our prison clothing was handed to us and we were told to strip and bathe.

As we handed out our own clothing it was bundled up, without any pretence of folding, by two prisoners, one of whom remarked, as I looked shocked at the way they were treating my clothes—

"It's all right, they'll be nicely pressed afore you go out."

When we were all bathed and clothed in prison dress we were called into the room again one by one to sign the inventories of our clothing and other property. Then, the doctor having now arrived, we were medically examined as to our fitness or otherwise for hard labour.

I was passed as fit for "industrial labour," which is what happens to the bulk of "hard labour" prisoners, comparatively few being passed as capable of the hardest kind of work. There is very little difference in the treatment of those certified for "hard" and those certified for "industrial" however, except in the first month, when the "hard" man is put to picking oakum and making coal-sacks, work which is never exacted from a man who is only certified as fit for "industrial" labour.

The medical examination finished, each man was given a pair of coarse sheets, a pillow-case, and a towel, and then a warder, saying "Convicts this way," led off the penal servitude men.

This left only three of us—the six-weeks' man, an old man convicted of begging at the West London Court, which is the only London police

court that sends its prisoners to the "Scrubs," and myself.

Another warder told us to "Lead on," and took us to "A" Hall, which is the westernmost block of the prison.

It was close on ten o'clock now, and, as the prison bed-time is eight, every one of the prisoners were in bed except the storeman of the hall, who was waiting to give us our combs and brushes, Bibles and prayer-books.

An elderly warder with a flowing white beard was standing at a desk placed at the foot of one of the iron spiral staircases leading above, and we were brought to a halt in front of him.

"Give the old gentleman a mattress," said he to the storeman after we had been provided with the combs, etc. He was referring to the old beggar, who was palpably over sixty, and was not therefore subject to the regulation which requires a hard-labour prisoner to sleep on the bare plank for the first fourteen days of his sentence.

"Come along, my friend," said he, as he beckoned to me, and proceeded to open the door of a cell placed right opposite his desk.

I went into the cell, but recoiled

"Haven't you made a mistake?" said I. "This is a workshop."

He made a pretence of looking into the cell, and then started back in feigned amazement.

"God bless my soul, so it is!" said he beaming on me in a fatherly sort of way. "But I think that it's also the boodwoor and the chamber a coocher, as the French say. You'll find a nice soft plank there and everything else as you can possibly want. We allus try to make our lodgers as comfortable as we can; but if you want anything as you can't see there don't trouble to ask for it."

Having worked off this bit of facetiousness on me, the warder gave me a gentle shove inside and closed the door on me.

On looking around me, I found that more than half the space of the cell, which was only of the ordinary size—about twelve feet by seven—was taken up by a loom for making mats, leaving a space of only about seven feet by five for my occupation.

The bed-board was standing against the wall, and I was putting it into position for my night's repose when my eye caught a bale of coir fibre that was stowed away behind the loom.

This, when spread out, mitigated the hardness

of the bed-board pretty considerably, and for the week I occupied that cell, waiting until an ordinary cell should become vacant, I slept much softer than the prison commissioners intended I should.

The events of the day had excited my brain to such an extent that I could not get to sleep at all, and that night was the longest of all the nights I passed in prison, with the single exception of the night before my release, which was longer still.

CHAPTER XX

THE OPTIMIST AND THE BURGLAR

AT last the intolerable stillness was broken by the welcome clang of the prison-bell, and the warders tramped into the hall a few minutes afterwards to commence the duties of the day.

It was pitch dark in my cell, and as some considerable time elapsed without my gas being lighted, or any notice at all being taken of my presence, I grew seriously afraid that I had been overlooked; so I pressed the knob that rings a bell and causes an indicator to fall down outside the cell.

No notice was taken of this, so I rang again, and, after a decent interval, yet again. This brought a warder, who unlocked my cell door and asked angrily.

"What are you kicking up that row for? Do you think that this is a bally hotel where you can ring for the waiter when you like?"

I humbly explained that I thought that I had been overlooked, and received in reply a growling admonition to have more patience in future.

That taught me that a man who rings his bell is not popular in prison, and I never used the bell again as long as I remained there. Warders discourage the ringing of bells by taking no notice of them unless the ring is repeated time after time, and perhaps this is necessary, inasmuch as a newcomer is prone to make a great deal more use of the bell than there is any necessity for. Men who know the ropes and want to get through their time as comfortably as possible never make use of the bell unless they are absolutely obliged to do so.

After the "cleaners" had collected my slops and my water-can had been replenished, I was left to kill time until breakfast by cleaning up my cell and polishing my tins. After breakfast, and while the other prisoners were at chapel, all the men who had been admitted the previous day were collected from the different "halls" by the reception-warders and taken over to the prison offices. Here we were taken in front of the deputy-governor, who asked us one by one how

much money we had brought in, and compared our answers with the entries in the reception-warder's book.

Mr Jabez Balfour, in his book "My Prison Life," pokes fun at this interview with the deputy-governor, and calls the question as to money ridiculous and superfluous. He says he was asked "if he had any money with him," which was an absurd question to ask a man who had been searched and had had all his belongings taken from him the day before. All I can say is that I did not see anything superfluous, absurd, or ridiculous about it. The question I was asked was, "What money did you bring in with you?" and its object was obviously to check the entry made to the prisoner's credit by the searching-warder.

After our interview with the deputy-governor we were ushered in to the assistant chaplain, who asked me firstly whether I acknowledged the justice of my conviction. I replied that I certainly did not. Then he inquired if I could read and write, and I said that I could read fairly well, but was afraid that I was a very indifferent writer. The schoolmaster in attendance was on the point of handing me an elementary reading-book to test my proficiency,

when the clergyman suddenly looked at me and asked where I was educated.

"Ah! I thought it was something like that," he remarked when I had acquainted him with the fact that I was a university man. He was rather icy in his manner and I fancied that he resented my reply to his reading and writing question, thinking that I was trying to take a rise out of him. As a matter of fact, my reply was a bit jocular, as the absurdity of asking prisoners indiscriminately whether they could read or write somewhat tickled me.

We were now taken back to the reception-ward again, where our bodies were carefully scrutinized for marks, and the men who had been sentenced to penal servitude had as much of their hair taken off their heads and faces as could be got off by scissors. There was not much hair left when the prisoner who acted as barber in the reception-ward had done with them, and I was astonished to see the difference in the men's appearance, which was so great as to make them almost unrecognizable. It brought home to me the fact, which I had never thought of before, that men owe a great deal to their hair. One man there, in particular, owed all his personal appearance to a nicely trimmed beard, the

moustache of a heavy dragoon of fiction, and a magnificent head of curly black hair. With all this hair doing duty he was a really handsome man, with nothing sinister about his appearance at all; but when he was stripped of it, he showed a chin tapering almost to a point, a weak sensual mouth, and an animal head, which taken together made one shiver involuntarily as one looked at him.

The barber worked in the passage between the baths and the search-room, and as we stood in a line awaiting our turn, we chatted in under-tones with no more restraint or hindrance than an occasional "Shut up out there" from the warder sitting at the desk in the search-room.

The old hands utilized the occasion by telling us all about what was in store for us, and the burden of their remarks was that prison life was not by any means so bad as people who had never been in prison imagined it to be.

The amiable burglar who had got ten years spoke words of encouragement to the man who was so terribly downhearted because he had been sent to prison for six weeks; but the poor wretch was inconsolable and the kindly exhortations to "Cheer up" only brought forth fresh floods of tears.

"If we was all like 'im," whispered the burglar to me, "there wouldn't be no need for more'n half a dozen prisons in the whole country, because nobody 'ud ever come to chokee a second time. Just fancy the 'ell on earth that he will have to put up with for the next six weeks, and then arsk yourself if he'll ever be able to look at a copper without a cold shiver runnin' down the hollow in the middle of 'is back."

"I've no doubt that the six weeks will do him a lot of good," I replied. "Have you met many men in your time who have taken it as badly as he is doing?"

"I shouldn't be proud of bein' a bloomin' Englishman if I 'ad come across many of his sort," he replied with a sniff.

That was my own feeling exactly, and I am pleased to say that I never met another man who took his punishment in such a cowardly spirit. This man occupied the cell next to mine for the first few days of his imprisonment, and I do not think that he ate anything the whole time, for I used to see him put his food out after every meal. His diet was very uninviting, it is true, for as his sentence was less than four months, he got nothing but potatoes, bread, skilly, and suet pudding for the first week; but hunger ought to

make a man tackle many things worse than prison porridge, and I was eating mine with enjoyment on the second day, though I only had to face it at breakfast and supper-time, while he had it for dinner also. The man of good position who had got three years' penal servitude, and who, like myself, had never been in prison before, was taking his medicine in a vastly different fashion.

"They tell me that you are much more to be pitied than I am," he said to me, in a tone that implied both sympathy for me and disinclination to change places,

"I'm hanged if I can see how that can be," I replied. "To start with, you will be in a year more than I shall be, for if you earn the whole remission you will have to do two years and three months, whilst I, under similar circumstances, will be out in a year and a quarter."

"That's true," he rejoined cheerfully; "but your year and a quarter will seem to be a longer time passing over your head than my two years and three months will appear to me. You see, you will be passing about twenty-two hours out of every twenty-four in your cell all the time, and the days will pass very, very slowly for you; but I, after the first six months, will be out

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working in a gang all day, and shall practically only be shut up by myself at night and at meal-times. Besides, I shall get better food than you: I start on the diet you will have to wait four months for, and when I get on to the works I shall have such things as cheese and butter, which you will never get.

"That's right," said the brown-eyed burglar, as he nodded his head energetically in my direction; "everybody as knows anythin' about it would rather hev 'is dose than yours. His worst time 'ull be the fortnight as he's got to stop here afore they sends 'im off somewhere to do his six months' separate."

Then the man with three years to do spoke hopefully of his future when he would come out after serving his time, though to my mind he hadn't any future to speak about, and told me that his wife had already made a good start in maintaining herself and the children by taking in lodgers. He and his wife were brave people, it was easy to see that, and as I listened to him I fervently wished that things would turn out well for them.

This nice gossipy time came to an end all too soon and from that time to this I have never seen nor heard anything of the optimist with three

years or the brown-eyed burglar with ten, though both of them are often in my thoughts, for I like to think of men who take the buffets of fate as they come, which accounts for my kindly remembrances of the optimist, and of men who blame nobody but themselves when they get into trouble, which explains my interest in the brown-eyed burglar.

CHAPTER XXI

EXERCISE

I HAD hardly been back in my cell five minutes when the door was banged open and a warder shouted "Exercise" as he hurried past.

I knew, of course, what this meant from my residence at Brixton, and was outside my cell with my cap upon my head, and making my way to the door that led into the yard, before the warder had unlocked the cell next to me.

As we passed into the yard, a warder standing at the door rubbed his hands down us to see if we had anything concealed about our persons, and woe betide the innocent newcomer who listens to the persuasion of some hungry-fellow prisoner and attempts to carry uneaten bread into the exercise-yard to pass it on. He will almost certainly be bowled out if the warder on duty at the door is not one of those who perform the rubbing down in a perfunctory manner, and then it will be a case of the using up of the one

offence without punishment that is generally allowed a prisoner.

Let the reader try and fancy a grass plot about fifty yards long and about twenty wide set with two elliptical asphalted paths, one within the other, the inside one being small and at some distance from the outer one, having huge concrete blocks at the ends and sides of the outer path for the warders, of whom there are always four to the eighty or so prisoners allowed in the yard at the same time, to see that the prisoners do not hold communication with one another, and otherwise keep order. At one end and at one side of this exercise ground there are large plots of garden ground which are tilled for vegetables by a gang of "Star" class prisoners.

The exercise ground is therefore rather a pleasant place, and the daily hour I spent in it slouching round and round the path with intervals of three feet between me and the men before and behind me, was the brightest hour of the whole twenty-four for me. This brightness did not come altogether from the open air and the restful green of the grass, which were pleasant enough in all conscience after twenty-three hours of whitewashed wall, but was largely

made up of the little tit-bits of news from outside that went round the circle at such times. The silent system is more or less a dead-letter, for it is not and cannot be so strictly enforced as to prevent communication between prisoners, and, notwithstanding the watching warders, conversation is pretty brisk at exercise time, and at many other times too for that matter. At exercise the warders are not sufficiently near to hear conversation, except when prisoners are actually close to their stands, and they are dependant upon their sight for detecting talking. As most men who have been in prison for any time acquire the accomplishment of talking without appreciably moving their lips or the muscles of their throats, sight is no safe guide, and frequently leads warders to check inexperienced prisoners who are not talking at all, but simply swallowing spittle or moving their lips to moisten them. Warders seem to recognize this fact, for I never knew of a man reported for talking unless he had been cautioned more than once and there could be no doubt whatever about the matter.

I didn't find this out all at once, of course, and on this first day at exercise I was almost terrified when I heard the man behind me actually break out into song. A gentleman in a

rather loud-patterned ulster was passing along the covered causeway at the end of the exercise ground that led from hall to hall, and as he came into full view the humorist at my back sang, quite loud enough for me to hear quite distinctly—

"Who will back a norse, boys, who will back a norse,
A shillin' to a fivah to any on the course;
A fivah to a pony, or even to a plum,
Me name is 'Ookey Walkah,' an' I come from bloomin Brum."

No warder's voice interrupted him, and he proceeded to tell me that the ulstered gentleman was known as "the bookie"; but I never heard any one else so refer to him.

"I say," he continued after a pause, as we passed a warder, "d'ye like 'addicks fer tea?"

I was afraid to open my mouth, and didn't want him to think that I was "stuck up," so I shook my head.

"Ah! that's a good job," he said, in a tone of relief, "'cause 'addicks ain't on the menoo to-day."

"Now then, number nine, stop that talking," shouted a warder.

I was number nine, and I hadn't said a single word.

The number of men I met in prison whose idea of happiness was the having of haddocks for tea was surprising. Can there be any connexion between this fish and an itching to possess other people's property without those other people's consent I wonder?

CHAPTER XXII

THE WARDER

AFTER the exercise I was shut up in my cell for the remainder of the day with nothing to do, and for a long time I sat idly on my stool and listened to the sounds of movement outside.

The cell was on the ground floor, and the ground floor of "A" Hall was a very busy place in working hours, if one might judge by the noise. One side of it was a rope walk, where rope-making was always going on; in the centre was a row of tables where mats were finished off; and on the other side bags were being filled with cork shavings for the interiors of the ships' fenders that are made at Wormwood Scrubs for the Royal Navy. If there is any hard labour done in the prison at all it is done here; but I cannot say that even here I ever saw anybody working as hard as an ordinary bricklayer's labourer has to work outside.

It was Friday, one of the two days in the week when the dinner includes a pint of delicious

pea-soup, and I looked forward to the midday meal, which is generally served in prison about a quarter of an hour before noon, with pleasure-able anticipation. But time hangs heavily indeed when one has idle hands and wishes to avoid the company of his thoughts, and dinner-time was a long time coming, so, with a view to obtaining something to do, I tapped on my door to attract the attention of the warder who was at the desk a few feet away.

No notice was taken of me for a long time, but I persevered until a key was somewhat viciously plunged into the lock and the door was flung open.

"Now then, what do you want?" snapped the warder who stood in the opening.

He looked so angry that I felt quite sorry that I had troubled him.

"I only wanted to ask you, sir, if you could give me some work to do," I said deprecatingly. A wise man in prison always "sirs" the warders, even assistant-warders, who like the practice so well that they even "sir" one another.

"I've got nothing to do with your work," he said sourly, "and I won't have you interfering with mine, so just chuck that hammering on your door."

He reached out for the handle of the cell door to shut me in again, but stopped with the handle in his hand and looked at me curiously.

"I've seen you before somewhere, haven't I?" he asked.

"Not to my knowledge," I replied.

"Oh yes, I have. You was in that Underground Railway affair, wasn't you?"

"This is the first 'affair' I was ever in," I said modestly.

"Oh, go and tell that somewhere else, you can't kid me," he said dogmatically. "I never forget a man's face, and I'll be able to put a name to yours before long."

"Well, you're mistaken this time, sir," I replied. "I've never been in trouble before in my life, and I'm certain that you've never seen me before."

"We'll see about that," he rejoined as he shut the door.

I didn't pay much attention to this incident at the time, but I fancy that it had a great influence upon my prison career.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE "STAR" CLASS

AS is pretty generally known, men of previous good character who are convicted for the first time are put in a class by themselves to prevent contamination by habitual criminals.

This is known as the "Star" class, and men serving in it are distinguished from other prisoners by a large red star on the front of the cap and on the sleeve of the coat above the elbow.

There is no doubt whatever that under the most strict test of eligibility I was fully entitled to be included in this class; but I was never put in it, and served the whole of my imprisonment in contact with the most hardened offenders that the prison contained.

I am not making any grievance out of it, because I believe that I was much better off in every way as I was than I should have been in the "Star" class; but as day after day went by

at the commencement of my imprisonment and I was not put in the class I began to feel hurt, and a sense of injustice grew up in my mind.

Now all prisons are visited periodically by inspectors of prisons, who generally visit the exercise yards in the company of a principal warder.

On arrival in the yard the principal warder in attendance on the inspector shouts out, "Exercise, halt. Inspector of Prisons. Any man wishing to make a complaint fall out. Remainder of exercise, move on."

Such a visit occurred when I was one day watching the "Star" men engaged in gardening whilst I was doing my daily hour's mooch round, and it suddenly struck me very forcibly that if I had my "rights" I might be among them.

I therefore fell out and made one of half a dozen discontented ones who claimed the attention of the inspector.

"Well, what do you want?" asked that official when in my turn I stood before him.

"I wish to ask, sir, why I have not been put in the 'Star' class?" I said respectfully.

"What's the use of asking me silly, foolish questions like that? How the devil should I know why you are not in the 'Star' class? It's nothing

to do with me what class they put you in. That's the visiting magistrates' affair, and you must ask them if you want to know. I've no doubt that they have very good reasons for keeping you where you are."

That is all the satisfaction I got out of His Majesty's Inspector of Prisons, and it was given to me in a testy, querulous tone that implied that I was a most unreasonable man to expect any satisfaction at all.

That same afternoon I received a visit from a clerk in the prison office, accompanied by a principal warder—not the one who had shown the inspector round.

"You complained to the inspector about not being put in the 'Star' class?" asked the clerk.

I nodded my head.

"Well, if you'll give me the names of your last two employers, and any other references as to respectability you may be inclined to offer, the matter shall be inquired into."

"I can't refer you to employers because I've never been in the position of having an employer," I answered; "and as to furnishing you with references, the idea is too absurd for me to entertain it for a moment."

"In that case," said the clerk, "I am afraid that nothing can be done for you."

"Mind you," said the principal warder aggressively, "you've got no grievance any more. If you won't give us information to enable us to find out who you are, you can't grumble at not being put in the 'Star' class."

I pointed out that the police would probably be able to assure the magistrates, or whoever it was that wanted my biography, that I had never been convicted before and that I had hitherto had no stain of any sort on my character; but he shook his head as much as to say that the police wouldn't commit themselves to anything of the sort.

Next morning I thought that I would carry the game a step further, and put down my name to see the governor.

The governor was very sympathetic and gentlemanly; but he said that the point had nothing to do with him.

"You can see the visiting justices at their next visit to the prison, if you like," he continued; "but if you take my advice you'll let the matter drop. I don't say that because I have any doubts as to the justice of your claim, but simply because I fancy you wouldn't

like the 'Star' class so well as your present surroundings."

I took the governor's word for it and moved no further in the affair. It was made clear to me afterwards that the "Star" men don't have nearly such good times in prison as the old hands do; for the warders do not trouble habitual offenders more than they are obliged to do, while they look very sharply indeed after the "Star" men. Further, I fancy that habitual offenders are more lively companions in prison than those who are there for the first time.

It appears to me that I was denied entry into the "Star" class owing to the warder professing to recognize me as an old criminal; but it may have been due to the police for all I know. In any case, it shows how easily the authorities are misled in such matters.

CHAPTER XXIV

DINNER

LET me now go back to my first dinner at Wormwood Scrubs. The dinner consisted of about a pint of good thick pea-soup with a distinct meaty flavour, three-quarters of a pound of indifferent potatoes, and a six-ounce loaf of brown bread. With the potatoes mashed into the soup it formed a dinner with a suspicion of Irish stew about it, and I never wish to eat anything better.

While on the subject of dinners, I may say that the only bad dinners one gets in prison are those allotted to Wednesdays and Saturdays, which consist of suet pudding made with brown flour, potatoes as on other days, and bread. I never could manage the suet pudding, so to the end of my time my dinner on those days consisted of potatoes and bread only; but use made even this meagre diet acceptable and satisfying. In the early days of my imprisonment I had some difficulty with my Monday dinners, which were

composed of haricot beans stewed in fat, a cube of bacon fat that was supposed to weigh two ounces, and potatoes and bread as usual. At first, I used to regard this as very unsatisfactory, and made no use whatever of the bacon fat, and very little use of the beans; but I very soon discovered that the piece of bacon fat, if allowed to get cold, made an excellent relish for the dry bread at supper-time, and after I had got through the first four months of my imprisonment, when I got a pint of thick greasy navy cocoa for supper instead of porridge, I used to have quite famous suppers on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, for by restraining my appetite for luxury I would make that nominal two ounces of fat serve me as a supper relish for those four days. The beans, when mashed up in the liquid fat in which they were always swimming, became very palatable, and would have been almost an epicurean dish if a little pepper could have been added to them; but although prisoners are allowed to have as much salt as they want, they are allowed no pepper at all. Thursday's dinner was four ounces of boiled fresh beef, with a small quantity of the liquor it was cooked in, which was tasty enough for any one, but there was barely enough meat and liquor to

help the potatoes and bread down. After four months the quantity of meat was increased by an ounce, and, strange as it may seem, that ounce seemed to be an appreciable increase that made a skimpy meal into a good one. On Sundays we got a gruesome reminiscence of the Whitechapel murder of thirty-odd years ago, for the prisoners called the preserved meat which was the staple of our Sunday meal "Harriet Lane," which, as middle-aged people will remember, was the name of the victim of that atrocious tragedy.

After dinner on that first day I was idly turning over the potato-tin, which fits into the top of the dinner-tin proper, when I saw some writing that had been scratched on the bottom with a needle or something of the sort. It ran: "May the Lord look sideways on Judge ——; he gave me twenty moon when I was only entitled to a stretch"—as to which I may say that "moon" is the prison vernacular for a month and "stretch" for a year.

Judge —— was the very judge who had sentenced me, and I was strongly tempted to add "Amen" to the legend on the tin; but I refrained on discovering that I had nothing that would make a scratch.

I used to inspect all my dinner-tins after this,

and came across many queer things written on them, but most of them were such as will not stand cold print. On one occasion, though, I happened on a couplet written in German that seemed to me at the time to be peculiarly apposite. It read—

> "Gott lässt die Böse hier auf Erden
> Oft ihre eignen Henker werden."

and may be very freely translated—

> "God lets bad men here below
> Often hang themselves you know."

This is very true indeed of the habitual criminal, so true that it would be pretty safe to say that the police would not get hold of half of them if they did not give themselves away by some act of folly.

The dinner interval in prison is very long, for after the prisoners are served the warders have to go away to their own meal, for which they are allowed an hour, so that the prisoners get an hour and a half at the least. After I got settled down in prison, I made a practice of passing this long middle-day interval on my back in comfort, by putting my bed-board down and lying on the top of the mattress and bed-clothing as folded. It was easy to replace the

bed-board and bedding in the regulation position for the day-time as soon as the bell rang for the resumption of the prison routine, and by the time my door was opened everything appeared as it ought. The one warder left in the hall at dinner-time on patrol must often have seen me passing the time in this unauthorized fashion, as it is part of his duty to look in at the prisoners through the "observation holes;" but nothing was ever said to me about it, which is one more reason for my opinion that prison warders do not go out of their way to make trouble for prisoners.

CHAPTER XXV

SOLACE

ON that first day's dinner-time I had not hit upon this pleasant way of passing the time; but I found something else that occupied all my spare moments for the first month of my imprisonment, when no library books are allowed. I started to read the Bible from cover to cover. How many of you who read this have ever read that book of books all through? How many of you will ever read it as long as you can get anything else to read? Not one in a hundred, I'll wager. Well, you'll miss something, let me tell you, if you don't read it. I read it through from end to end twice over during that first month, and I didn't have a dull hour the whole time. Putting its sacred character aside altogether, the Bible ought to be read by everybody for the worldly wisdom it contains, and I became more and more surprised every day that I had never discovered this fact before. Hafiz, Omar Khayyam, and Co. are simply "not in it"

with the Bible, if you will but take the trouble to think as you read, and I hold the opinion that if my imprisonment had done nothing else for me, the new ideas and the new outlook on life that I got from that month's close thoughtful reading of the Scriptures would have been ample compensation for the inconvenience I suffered. I don't want to be misunderstood, so I will say that my remarks on this head are not to be taken as an admission that I "got religion" during the process, because, as a matter of fact, I was no more religious when I had finished the course of reading than I had been at the start. I am not touching upon the question of religion at all, and my recommendation to read the Bible is based on the conviction that it is one of the best storehouses of secular wisdom in existence.

CHAPTER XXVI

GOOD-NIGHT

THAT night, about two hours after supper-time, when all prisoners were locked in their cells, the stillness of the prison was suddenly broken by the opening and shutting of cell doors and the voices of warders giving some two-worded order which I could not make out. They did not come to my cell and I got no explanation of the tumult for several days afterwards, by which time my curiosity was at fever-heat as the same thing happened every night. Then I discovered that the cell doors were opened in order that the prisoners should put any work or material they had in their cells outside the door for the night, and that the short, sharp two-worded order that was repeated at every cell and had puzzled me so much was simply "Work out."

Following the first warder on these occasions comes a prisoner, whose duty it is to collect the scissors and other tools in use, and he is quickly

followed by the second warder who, after satisfying himself that all the prisoner's work is outside, closes the cell door and locks it for the night. This ceremony is called "Locking," and no prisoner is supposed to go to bed before it has been performed. Almost immediately after the warders have finished their round the prison-bell rings for bed, and a few minutes after this the lights are turned out, so that by a quarter-past eight at the latest the cells are in darkness.

Many of the old hands among the prisoners take advantage of the two warders being employed on another landing or at the other end of their own, as may be gathered from the banging of doors and clashing of keys, to shout greetings to one another by kneeling down and applying their mouths to the crack between tbe bottom of the door and the floor, so that there is a pretty continuous run of shouts like "Good-night Billy," "Cheer up Jimmy," and so on, all the time the warders are locking up. This sort of thing only happened in "A" Hall of the two halls in which my imprisonment was served. In "B" Hall I never heard a single shout during the locking time, but three out of the four "wards" or landings in this hall were occupied

by "Star men," "Second Division" men, and "Debtors" who would naturally be too subdued to do anything of the kind, and the eighty men on the top landing who belonged to neither of these classes could hardly be called old hands, as there were few who had been in prison more than once before.

I slept as well as I could wish on the second night of my imprisonment, although my couch was not as comfortable as might be desired, notwithstanding the fact that my find of the bale of coir fibre kept me off the bare board, and from this time onwards until the last night of my imprisonment, when I didn't sleep at all, I never had a bad night's rest. After the bare-board stage I found the prison beds very comfortable indeed, though I must stop short of calling them luxurious, and I imagine that few people who find themselves in prison sleep softer outside than in.

CHAPTER XXVII

A TEMPTATION

NEXT morning, immediately after the breakfast interval I made my first visit to the prison chapel. "Chapel" is part of the daily routine, and takes up about three-quarters of an hour of the fourteen which comprise a prisoner's waking day. Of this three-quarters of an hour to an hour the actual service occupies about half an hour, the remainder of the time being taken up with the filing in and out, which is rather a long process. The seating of the prisoners is managed so that the convicts who are making a temporary stay in the prison enter the chapel first and sit right in front, thus seeing nobody but themselves and the officiating clergyman. Then come the hard-labour men of the general class, who can see the convicts but cannot see any class superior to themselves. Next in order are the "Star" men, behind them again come the "Second Division," and right at the back are the "Debtors," who can see all

classes in the prison but cannot be seen themselves. In going out after the service the order is reversed, the debtors leaving first, so it will be seen that a hard-labour man in one of the front rows has to sit still waiting for some time before and after service.

A great deal of conversation goes on during these intervals, in spite of the warders perched up at the end of about every third form, and also in spite of the fact that there is an interval of about two feet between each prisoner. Many and many a tale of unpunished robbery, and many and many a discussion as to future coups have I listened to as I sat in chapel; and I could, had I been so disposed, have told the police many things that they would have been glad to hear. But I judged, and rightly so I think, that it was no duty of mine to act the part of informer and I do not think that I would have been willing to speak even if I had been directly questioned. I was asked on one occasion to repeat a conversation that I had overheard between two prisoners who were plotting the downfall of a warder who they thought had not treated them fairly in the matter of the quantity of "snout," or tobacco, and eatables that he had smuggled in to them in exchange for money

provided by their friends. The warder's conscience must have been uneasy, for he came to my cell after chapel and offered to bring me in some ham sandwiches—terrible temptation!—if I would tell him what they had been talking about. I tried hard to put away from me the instantaneous vision of nice new slices of sandwich loaf and pink and white ham plentifully bespattered with mustard—the mustard was almost a greater temptation than the bread and ham, for prison food is terribly wanting in piquancy; but it would float about in my mind's eye, and I almost fancied that I could feel that much-desired bite of the mustard on my tongue. If it had been merely a question of deciding between the warder plus sandwiches and the prisoners minus sandwiches, I should certainly have succumbed; but I was mortally afraid of having anything to do with trafficking, and this fear turned the scale in the prisoner's favour.

I had to lie boldly if I lied at all, so I replied to the effect that I had not heard them talking at all, and that I did not believe that they had been talking.

"I saw them," he retorted.

"I shouldn't like to say that you were mistaken," I replied in an indifferent tone; "but

I can't understand how it was that they could manage to talk without my hearing them, seeing that they were sitting right in front of me."

This seemed to satisfy him, and he went away rather more reassured than he ought to have been. He disappeared from our view some little time after this, and it was rumoured that he had been dismissed the service for trafficking; but whether his dismissal was brought about by the machinations of those two particular prisoners I cannot say.

CHAPTER XXVIII

COMPLAINTS

ON the first occasion of my attending chapel at the "Scrubs" I overheard a conversation between two men seated behind me that got firmly wedged in my memory.

"It sez in my libery book," remarked the first, "that pris'ners in gaol live longer than other people. That's curious, ain't it?"

"Don't see anythin' curious abaht it," growled number two; "ev'ry bloke as I've ever come acrost knows as a 'moon' in here is as long as a 'stretch' outside.

"I know all about that meself," said the other one grumpily. "Wot I mean is that men in gaol get older than people as keeps out."

"My oath they do," chuckled number two; "ther's nothin' like 'stir' fer makin' a bloke old."

"I don't want ye to take no liberties wi' me," said number one sourly. "You know what I mean as well as I do, an' if you want ter take a

rise out of anybody you'd better try someone else."

"All right, mate; don't get shirty," replied the other soothingly. "It's all right wot it sez in the book; but I don't want ter live long, fer one, if I've got ter do most of the livin' in 'ere. I'd rather hev one year wi' the pals an' the gels up 'Oxton way than ten year in the most comfortable 'stir' as was ever invented."

I suppose he was exceptionally successful outside. My experience of the genus gaol-bird leads me to think that the bulk are poor miserable creatures who return to gaol time after time because they are more comfortable there than they are outside.

Another means of communications between prisoners in chapel is furnished by the singing. On my first appearance there I was asked how long I had got, what it was for, and if I had managed to smuggle any "snout" in with me, all to the tune of the *Magnificat*, while the congregation was singing that anthem; and, though it went sorely against my grain to profane the service in this way, I felt constrained to answer in the same manner, inasmuch as a friendly warder had cautioned me at the very start of my prison life not to be stand-offish or stuck-up with my

fellow-prisoners, as if they once got the idea into their heads that I was giving myself airs, they could make things very uncomfortable for me in ways that carried no redress.

Immediately after chapel on that Saturday came exercise, and a very exciting time it was. Being only a new-comer, I didn't know at the time what led up to the scene I am about to describe; but I learned afterwards that just about that time there had been an attempt to enforce the labour regulations with greater strictness, and that there was great dissatisfaction among the old hands in consequence. For instance, the labour regulations require that a man who is sentenced to "hard labour," and is passed by the doctor as being physically fit for it, shall pick three pounds of oakum per day, if he is set to picking oakum, during the time he is in the first stage—that is, until he has earned a certain number of marks, which he can do in twenty-eight days if he gets the full number of marks allowed. Now it appears that a custom had grown up of being satisfied with much less than the regulation three pounds; in fact, a man told me that he had never picked that quantity in a day in his life, though he had been sentenced to "hard labour" no less than eleven times, and

had been employed on picking oakum during his first stage on every occasion.

Few people in this world are as keen on sticking up for their "rights" as habitual criminals in gaol, and as the old hands at the "Scrubs" at that time had previously only done about as much work as they wanted to do, they were naturally very much hurt at the attempt of the authorities to exact something more nearly approaching the regulation pound of flesh than had been the custom, though I do not think that even then they stuck out for the full three pounds laid down on the labour card.

I am told that in some workhouses honest paupers are compelled to pick *four* pounds of oakum a day; that is, a pound more than a man sentenced to hard labour has to do in the initial stage only of his punishment. A man sentenced to hard labour does not pick oakum at all, or he didn't do so at Wormwood Scrubs during my time there, after he passes out of the first stage; but the honest pauper, I am told, has to pick oakum all the time. My informant on this point assured me that he once got seven days' hard labour in Chelmsford Gaol, where his maximum task was three pounds of oakum a day and he actually got off with about half that quantity, for refusing

to pick *four* pounds of oakum a day in Dunmow Workhouse.

The dissatisfaction in the prison culminated on this Saturday morning in the visit of either an inspector of prisons or a visiting magistrate, I am not sure which, as I did not hear the principal warder who accompanied the visitor announce his quality.

There were a large number of men—two or three dozen I would say—who fell out of the ranks to make complaints, and I was told afterwards that all of them were indignant at the tightening of the labour screw.

One of them in particular was very much excited, and shouted what he had to say, so that there was no difficulty in hearing him.

"They're treatin' us like dogs," he howled, as soon as his turn came to interview the visitor.

I was passing close by at the time and heard the visitor's answer.

"We don't lay ourselves out to give you *all* the comforts of home," he said good-humouredly.

"They want me to do three pound of oakum a day," yelled the complainant. "I ain't never done it afore, an' I ain't agoin' ter do it now."

"Well, I'm afraid I cannot help you," replied

the visitor. "You must settle that little matter with the governor."

"I'll report you to the Sekittary of State," foamed the now furious prisoner. "You're supposed ter come 'ere ter see as they don't jump on us—an' you bloomin' well 'elp 'em ter do it."

The visitor walked away without making any reply, and the prisoner was hustled back into the ranks.

When all the complainants had been interviewed and most of them were almost as excited and unreasonable as the one reported in detail, the visitor went into the next yard, the gate of which was left standing open.

Then it suddenly occurred to the man whose remarks are given above that he had something more to say, and he left his place in the ranks and started in the direction of the adjoining yard.

"Get back into your place," shouted the warder in charge of the exercise.

"I wanter see the inspector agin, and I'm goin' to, whether you like it or not," yelled the prisoner, who, by the way, was a big athletic customer that few men would have cared to stand up to.

The warder made no reply in words, but got down from his perch on the block of concrete and caught the prisoner by the arm with the intention of pushing him back into the ranks.

As soon as the prisoner felt the warder's touch on his arm, he swung round on his heel, and bringing his left fist plump on the point of the officer's jaw, he felled him like a pole-axed bullock.

The exercise stopped like one man, and the other three warders jumped off their pedestals and rushed on the mutineer, taking out their "coshes," or staves, and blowing their whistles as they ran.

The first officer to reach the prisoner rushed on him with uplifted truncheon, but before he could bring it down the prisoner had caught him under the arm with his right hand and given him a punch on the solar plexus with his left that doubled him up.

He tried the same dodge with the second warder; but the officer was too sharp for him, and brought the cosh down with a swinging blow on to the prisoner's head, laying him out at full length on the ground, looking just like a statue that had been pushed off its pedestal.

It was the regular father and mother of a crack, that was, and it echoed all over the yard with a sort of sickening smashing sound, just as if someone had hit a half-ripe pumpkin as hard as possible with a broomstick.

When the prisoner knocked out the warder there were smiles on the faces of many of the other prisoners, but the knocking down of the prisoner was not approved of at all, and was greeted with "boos" and cries of "shame."

This had all taken place in the space of a minute or two, and so far no reinforcement of warders had arrived in response to the whistles; but now the jingling of keys was heard from inside the hall and, the locked grille being opened, half a dozen officers rushed into the yard.

The scene at that moment looked more like melodrama than real life. There was the prisoner lying on the ground, his face like the face of a wax figure, with a little rivulet of blood running down it from the gash made by the warder's truncheon; the knocked-out warder was lying a few yards away all in a heap like a man struck by lightning; the warder that had been punched in the solar plexus was leaning against the wall looking very sick, and the prisoners at exercise stood in the ranks as they had halted,

looking very much interested and murmuring among themselves.

Then the irrepressible "Back a norse" man, who was again placed behind me, imported a glimmer of comedy into the situation by singing, in tones that suggested amused sarcasm—

> "Oh me! oh my! Wormwood Scrubs afore the Union fer me,
> For they feeds yer an' they clothes yer,
> Kerwite as good as any workin' man or soljer;
> An' ye does a little work fer a portion of the day,
> While ye all goes ter chapel on a week-day."

This is horrible doggerel of course, but it didn't sound so bad as it looks in print, and the funny way he droned it out caused me to smile in spite of the tragical surroundings. He himself smiled on the other side of his face a few seconds afterwards, for, counting too much on the confusion, he raised his voice as the song progressed and was heard by a warder, who came up behind him to assist in moving the exercise on. On the next day but one, Monday, he had an interview with the governor, and got three days' bread and water, with the consequent loss of three days' remission, a punishment that also carries with it loss of exercise and deprivation of chapel, a very real punishment indeed, for the bread-and-water period.

The first thing the warders did on the arrival of the reinforcement was to draw their truncheons and threateningly order the nearly mutinous prisoners to move on, and after a momentary hesitation the exercise began to move round again, the officers taking the numbers of several men who showed unwillingness to move. Then the wounded prisoner was carried to hospital and the knocked-out warder, who had recovered consciousness, was led away.

I heard afterwards that, in addition to the crack on the skull, which kept him in hospital for some time, the mutinous prisoner was sentenced by the visiting magistrates to lose the whole of his remission and be kept for a considerable period on punishment diet.

The bulk of the prisoners thought that the row did good, though, for the work-warders after this were said to moderate their demands; but I personally know nothing of all this, as I hadn't been put to work at all at the time of the disturbance, and when I was found something to do, the work-warders didn't trouble me much, as will be seen later.

CHAPTER XXIX

SUNDAY

THE next day was Sunday, and Sunday in gaol is the worst day of the week, for there is no bustle and nothing to help the flight of time, except reading and the two chapel services, which each last about an hour and a half. The evening service commences at half-past one in the day and finishes at three. Supper is served before four, and after supper most of the prisoners go to bed. It is a common practice of prisoners to seek to mitigate the terrible monotony of the prison Sunday by secreting a part of their work instead of putting the whole of it out on Saturday night, and surreptitiously doing it on Sunday. I myself only had four or five dismal Sundays, for early on in my imprisonment I discovered that there was a way of getting a supply of books from outside which could be kept in one's cell and used to vary the literary pabulum issued from the prison library. I was put up to this by a man who occupied the

next cell to the one in which I was placed a few days after my first Sunday in prison.

"What a terrible day Sunday is!" I said to him on my second Sunday, as we were waiting our turn to come out of chapel after service.

"Indeed! I don't find it so," he replied. "I think that it is the best day in the week, and I think that you will come to the same conclusion if you will do as I have done. This isn't my first experience of prison, unfortunately, so I am up to all the ropes. Among the things I learned when I was here before was that if one goes judiciously to work it is possible to have books sent in from outside, the conditions on which this is allowed being that the books must be of an instructional nature, and that they must be given to the prison library after you have done with them."

"But the amount of amusement to be got out of school-books is very limited, surely," I objected.

"Just so; but the old chaplain is a very liberal-minded man, and his definition of a book of instruction is very wide. I have books in my cell that are anything but school or college text-books, and they help me to pass the time very well."

I opened the ball the next morning by putting down my name to see the chaplain, who never intrudes on a prisoner unless the prisoner expresses a desire to see him. I had been warned not to prefer my request to the assistant-chaplain if he came instead of the chaplain, as he was one of that large class of men who always seek some reason for refusing a request instead of an excuse for granting it, and that the chaplain himself could hardly stultify his assistant by granting a request after he had refused it. Accordingly, when the assistant-chaplain turned up in the dinner-time, which is the time the chaplains generally make their rounds, I switched myself off the request I was going to make to be allowed to have some books sent in, and asked simply if there were any German Bibles in the prison, and, if so, whether I might have one instead of the English one that had been served out to me.

"What do you want a German Bible for?" asked the assistant-chaplain, in a tone which suggested that I might possibly want it to make a hole in my cell wall with. "Are you a German?"

I replied to the effect that I was not a German, but that I was able to read the German language, and wanted the Bible for purposes of study.

"No," he said, "I am afraid that you cannot have a German Bible. We have them, of course, but they are for German prisoners, and there is no precedent for issuing one to an English prisoner."

On my telling my next-door neighbour the result of this interview, he said that I had better not apply again to see the chaplain until I got into the second stage, as although instructional books are allowed to prisoners in the first stage, it was extremely doubtful whether permission would be given for any books to be sent in to me until I was over my first month.

As soon as I reached the second stage I put down my name again to see the chaplain, and this time it was the dear old chaplain himself who came to see me. He was very sympathetic, said not a single word about religion, and readily gave me permission to tell my friends when I wrote to them, which I should not be entitled to do for another twenty-eight days, as one is not entitled to write or receive a letter or have a visit until he reaches the third stage.

I pointed this out to him, when he at once volunteered to write to my friends himself, and in a few days afterwards the schoolmaster brought to me a book of mathematical examples

taken from University Examination Papers, a Russian grammar and reader, "Don Quixote" in the original Spanish, and Schiller's "Thirty Years' War" in the original German. Later on I got other books as I needed them, but I was not allowed to have more than six in my cell at any one time. In addition to these books of my own, I got the usual one book a week during the time I was in the second stage, that is during my second month in prison, and two books a week afterwards, from the prison library. There were no dull Sundays or any other dull days for me then.

CHAPTER XXX

HARD LABOUR

I HAVE been anticipating a bit and must get back to my second week in gaol. When I had been in the "Boodwoor" for a week with nothing to occupy my hands all the time, I was taken to a cell on the "Twos" or first floor landing. I hadn't been in possession of my new abode for an hour when I received a visit from a warder who was accompanied by two prisoners carrying a sort of stool with a pair of scales on it, and a box containing chopped pieces of rope, while another prisoner followed behind with a sack on his shoulders.

A quantity of the rope was put on the scale and a pretence made of weighing it. Then it was pitched into my cell.

"Slip into that now," said the warder. "You're tasked to do that lot in a day, you know."

"What have I got to do with it?" I asked.

"Never been in prison before?" he asked suspiciously.

I replied in the negative, and he signed to one of the men with him. The man came into my cell, sat down on my stool, and showed me how to unravel the pieces of rope, while the man with the sack took a handful of the finished product out and showed it to me.

It was lightly twisted coir rope, not tarred hemp which is the rope that oakum-pickers have to deal with, and the picking it into fibre was as hard work as whittling a soft stick with a sharp penknife would be. I found it a pleasant pastime, as the light employment for the fingers made the thoughts flow easily, and time went by as rapidly as could be desired. Notwithstanding the warder's injunction to "slip into it," there was never any pretence of making me do any specified quantity, and I did just as much as suited me. I always had the sense to pretend to be very hard at work when the governor, deputy-governor, or chief warder was knocking about, and that was apparently all that the work-warder expected of me.

When I had been in prison ten days the warder in charge of my landing brought me a mattress as an intimation that my bare plank period was over.

"But I have only been here ten days," I

objected, "and I am not entitled to it for another four days yet."

"Take it in and be thankful," he rejoined. "You was transferred to me as being entitled to your bed to-day, and here it is. I've got enough troubles of my own without worrying myself over other people's mistakes. If you'll take my tip, you won't put yourself out if you're offered anything you're not entitled to in here; they're not likely to make many mistakes that way."

I took the mattress and was thankful, for even with the mitigation I had been lucky enough to secure downstairs, the bare plank was rather inconvenient, and I had been exposed to the full rigour of it since I came upstairs four days before. That coir fibre mattress seemed to me to be the very last word in comfort that night.

About a fortnight after this I was transferred to "B" Hall, which was a great change for the better, inasmuch as I now had a cell with a boarded floor instead of the asphalte which is the rule in "A" Hall. There was also an absence of the clanging and banging that went on all day in "A" Hall, as "B" Hall is devoted to the manufacture of mail-bags for the post-o ffice and bed-casings for the army.

I was located here on the top floor, or the "Fours," as the top landing is called in prison, and was set to sewing brown canvas casings for army beds. These casings are made in three pieces, and the sewing required is simple backstitching with an ordinary sewing-needle and waxed thread. It could hardly be described truthfully as hard labour for a girl of fourteen, and for a man it was simply child's play. I was six months on these cases with an occasional change to mail-bags, which work was just a trifle harder, and I jogged along very comfortably on about one case a day, which was less than half of what I was supposed to do according to the labour card. Beyond saying occasionally that he wished I would try and do a little more, the work-warder never worried me, and my days passed peacefully and happily, which is, I take it, hardly the effect aimed at by our prison system.

If one worked the hours supposed to be devoted to labour they would only amount to about six hours a day; that is to say, an hour before breakfast, an hour and a half between breakfast and dinner, and three hours and a half between dinner and supper. But as there is practically no supervision over the eighty or so

per cent. of the prisoners who work in their cells, they can work or not as they please during these hours, provided they manage to turn out enough work to satisfy the work-warders. As the work-warders are pretty easily satisfied, there are few prisoners work the full labour time if they can find something else to do. I never worked, or played at working rather, for more than four hours a day during all the time that I worked in my cell, which was for the first ten months of my sentence, and as far as I could ascertain no other prisoners did more as long as they had something to read.

Yet, strange to say, Wormwood Scrubs has a bad name among habitual criminals. I have, over and over again, heard old hands abuse it as being the strictest prison in their experience, and one of them told me that he "would a' most as soon be in the work'us." I also saw many remarks to the same effect scratched on the whitewash in the conveniences in the exercise yard, one of them running—"This is the wustest stir as ever was." What must the favourite prisons of the criminal be like?

CHAPTER XXXI

"THE FERRET"

THE warder in charge of the "Fours" in "B" Hall in my time was a little sharp cockney who was, by the prisoners, nicknamed "The Ferret." And a very apt nickname it was too. He was a very decent chap indeed when one got to know him, and I never knew him to report any one unless he was absolutely obliged to do so. One of the few prisoners I knew him to report was my next-door neighbour on the right, and him he reported so often that the poor devil seemed to me to be passing about half his time on bread and water. He was a young fellow, not yet nineteen years of age, and the conviction he was then serving out was his eleventh. He would neither wash himself if he could help it, nor would he keep his cell clean, and the warder, after standing this sort of thing as long as he could, would report him, and he would get three days' bread and water. I

thought at the time that a much better way of dealing with him would have been to hand him over to three or four clean prisoners and let them teach him cleanliness in their own way; but of course such a proceeding would never be countenanced under our ultra-humanitarian prison system.

The Ferret fell foul of me on one occasion. In every cell there hangs a card drawing prisoners' attention to the Prisoners' Aid Society, and giving instructions as to how to go to work to obtain the assistance of that organisation. The card hanging in my cell was dirty and dilapidated and The Ferret brought me a new one. Now I was in the habit of using the old card as a sort of dustpan to collect the sweepings of my floor and put the dust outside my door for the cleaners to take away. I did the same thing with the new card, and went off to chapel unconscious of having done The Ferret any wrong.

I had no sooner got back from chapel, however, than he came to my cell and spoke to me very rudely indeed.

"I shall report you," he said, "if I catch you using your Aid card to put dust on any more. Here am I doin' every mortal thing in my power to make you happy and comfortable, even going

out of my way to get you a nice new card, that I wasn't obliged to do at all, and you go and make a dustpan of it. Chaps like you are enough to break a feller's 'art."

"It is only clean dust here," I said soothingly, "and wouldn't do the card any harm."

"Yus it would," he replied. "When you get a nice clean new card like that you shouldn't touch it at all. If you must use a card for your dust, use your prayer-card; that's dirty enough now and won't hurt."

And as he said, so it happened: henceforth the card that was supposed to guide my morning and evening devotions became my dustpan, and I daily blew the dust off the Prisoners' Aid Society Card as it hung on the wall, not daring to finger it.

When I had been a member of The Ferret's flock for about six months, and thought that I was settled down for the rest of my sentence, he cast me out as an undesirable, and I was returned to the residuum in "A" Hall.

I was a bit hurt at the time, for I had been hugging the belief that I was a model prisoner and that the warder would not part with me while there was any one else left to part with, but I soon came to see The Ferret's point of view

and am convinced that I would have done as he did had I been in his place.

In short, I had got into the habit of giving The Ferret trouble, and he didn't see why he should put up with it. The trouble, both for me and for The Ferret, arose in this way:

I always had a loaf of bread a day that I could not eat, and for some time I passed it on to one of the cleaners who had confided to me that he couldn't sleep o' nights for the hunger that tormented him. One day The Ferret saw me passing the loaf, and told me paternally that it was a very wrong thing to do. Now I didn't want to be reported for doing a thing like that, for if I had, it would certainly mean my staying another three days in prison, as well as having three days bread and water on the spot, so I struck the idea of handing over the daily surplus loaf to The Ferret himself. If I had known what a mean and paltry revenge I was taking I would not have done it, but I didn't know it for long afterwards, when it was too late. It appeared that my handing that loaf to the warder imposed upon him the task of entering it in a book called "The Returned Food Book," which is so seldom used that it is not taken into account when a warder reckons up his clerical

duties, and returning the loaf to the kitchen, where it caused further trouble.

Naturally enough, when The Ferret was requested one day to send half a dozen strong able-bodied men over to "A" Hall for the purpose of being employed on turning the crank of the rope-making machine, his thoughts turned to me, though he must have had some slight doubt in his mind as to whether I properly came under the definition, and to "A" Hall I went accordingly, much to my indignation and distress, for I was very comfortable in "B" Hall and my wildest hopes did not picture me as being anywhere near so well off elsewhere. One never knows, however, how the most unpromising prospects are going to turn out, and in this case the change was all for the better and I blessed The Ferret in my heart.

CHAPTER XXXII

HARD IDLENESS

AS soon as I got over to "A" Hall I was promptly rejected with contempt for crank-turning work, the opinion as to my worthlessness being cordially endorsed by me, and I was put into a cell on the top floor, from whence I could, by climbing up to the window, see football matches and cricket matches in their respective seasons being played on the adjacent Scrubs, and could also take a look at the country whenever I felt disposed to do so. There were also musical evenings twice a week for some months, provided by some friends of my next-door neighbour, who used to come and stand under the prison wall with a cornet, a fiddle, and a banjo, and play such tunes as "Down by the Suwanee River." They always finished up with "Auld Lang Syne" and "Home Sweet Home," after which they would shout in chorus: "Good night, Billy. Be a good boy and get on with your oakum."

My neighbour on the other side even managed to do a little flirting over the wall. One evening he shouted to a girl who was walking in the field, and struck up a conversation with her. She came many times after that until the gay Lothario got tired of her and told her that it was no use her waiting for him as he was "in for life."

They made mail-bags on the top floor of "A" Hall, like they did in the hall I had come from, but I was not considered worthy of being employed in this way, and was put on picking fibre again, which is almost tantamount to saying that I had all my time at my own disposal.

Free from all care, able to eat the prison food with enjoyment, and with practically as many books as I wanted, I had an enviable time of it; and I often thought with something like dismay of the time when I would be compelled to again mix in the busy world and be worried by the landlord and the rate-collector. Our prisons would have to be considerably enlarged, I think, if struggling, harassed men realized what a haven of rest they provide for those who are in danger of breakdown from sheer worry.

My next door neighbour, the Lothario, was a barber, who was in for stealing inclosures from

letters addressed to persons occupying offices in the building of which his shop formed the ground floor. His "hard labour" consisted in cropping the heads of his fellow-prisoners, and a very nice job he had, for the hair-cutting is done in the open air at exercise time, and as there were three or four separate "exercises" of eighty men in the hall, he was in the open air for three or four hours a day with every facility for gossip *pour passer le temps.* He was a very cheerful and optimistic character, as was in fact my neighbour on the other side, and we got on famously together. He used to say jocosely that he had always had an ambition to work at his trade in the West End of London, but was afraid that he had overshot the mark this time and got too far west.

My neighbour on the other side was a medical student who was serving an imprisonment of fifteen months for obtaining cash for a worthless cheque, and the friends who used to come and serenade him were medical students also. His case appeared to me to be a very hard one. According to his own account the cheque had been given to him in payment of a card debt, and he had no idea that it was not a good one. Unfortunately he had previously been fined for

being in unlawful possession of some billiard-balls that had been taken from a public billiard-room. This counted as a previous conviction and may have had something to do with the severe sentence. He explained this conviction, by saying that the balls were in his possession as the result of a practical joke. He and some other students in a rather elevated condition had been playing billiards, and, in coming away, one of the others had slipped the balls into his overcoat pocket without his knowledge, which is an extremely likely thing to happen, and has, in fact, happened to me. The balls were missed, and he was followed and given into custody, being in the result fined forty shillings. He told me all this with such a truthful air, and seemed such a decent fellow, that I could not help but believe him, though it does seem hard to credit that the magistrate paid no heed to his explanation if it was so obvious as he made it out to be. I asked him what effect his conviction would have upon his career, and he considerably astonished me by replying that he did not anticipate that it would have any effect beyond the loss of time, as the authorities of the medical school he was attending took the view that he had been guilty of nothing more than carelessness

and were willing to take him back. He didn't know anything about the dodge of getting books sent in, so I put him up to it, and he was able to minimise the waste of time by getting text-books for study.

CHAPTER XXXIII

AN ATTEMPTED ESCAPE

ONE Saturday afternoon, while I was in this cell, I witnessed the only attempt at escape that occurred in the prison, as far as I know, while I was an inmate. I was perched up at my window as usual, watching a football match, when, casting my eyes down into the prison yard, I saw a prisoner rush round the corner of the block and make for the wall. He had a sort of roughly made ladder over his shoulder, and placing this against the boundary wall of the prison, he commenced to mount it. The ladder was a long piece of scantling to which cross-pieces had been nailed so as to leave a foothold on the projecting ends. When he was about half-way up, the contraption turned over and left him hanging on the underside, like a monkey on a stick, and this happened two or three times; but he tried over and over again, and at last got his hands on the top of the wall, when he stopped to take breath.

Up till now, he did not appear to have been

missed, and some people will no doubt argue that it was my duty to give the alarm. I don't think that it would have been a sportsman-like thing for me to have done so, and I did nothing. Things were in this interesting position when the sound of a measured tramp coming along the landing in my direction warned me that a warder was approaching and that it was therefore necessary for me to get down as the officer might look in on me and consider it his duty to report my breach of regulations, for it was forbidden to climb up and look out of the windows.

When I got up again, after the warder had passed, I saw the prisoner over on the free side of the prison wall, running across country for all he was worth, while the footballers suspended their game to stare after him. No one appeared to be pursuing him at the moment, but some one must have gone round to the prison gate and given the alarm, or the man must have been missed from within, for a few minutes afterwards a posse of warders appeared and started off in the direction taken by the fugitive, who had now got out of sight. More warders presently appeared on the scene, and as long as there was sufficient light I saw them spread out searching the country, apparently without success.

I heard next morning in chapel that the man was eventually discovered hiding in a ditch by two boys, sons of warders, who were out bird-nesting, and that the boys had dissembled their discovery, so as to leave the escaped prisoner under the impression that they had not seen him at all, until they met a party of warders and led them to the spot. It was reported that the governor made the two boys a present of two pounds each, and that the poor devil of a prisoner was very roughly handled by the warders who captured him, which was very likely the case, as warders do that kind of thing I am afraid.

The version of the escape that came round to me was to the effect that the man was a carpenter who had only a few weeks more to serve, and that he had been left unattended in the carpenter's shop on that afternoon sufficiently long for him to improvise the ladder to get over the wall. How he managed to get out of the building with his ladder over his shoulder I never heard, and that was the most interesting part, for it must have required either remarkable ingenuity or an astonishing amount of bluff.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE SUSPECTS

FOLLOWING closely on this attempted escape there was a remarkable upset in the prison. All the prisoners in one of the halls were turned out of their beds one night and thoroughly searched to discover those who were concerned in alleged extensive trafficking operations. I cannot say anything about this incident from my own personal knowledge, because it did not occur in my hall, but I overheard a prisoner who had been concerned in it, and who had been transferred to my hall afterwards, give a most interesting account of it in chapel. I made a note of this at the time, and reproduce it here in the man's own words as nearly as possible:

"Yes, they had a fine time," he said, in answer to a question. "They cased" (confined to cell with all furniture taken out and fed on bread and water) "about twenty-four in the hall together, mostly on the 'twos' and 'threes.' There was

about twenty found with 'snout,' and a good many with cheese and eggs. I had about two ounces of thin twist in my cell, but they didn't find it, and they didn't find any grub either, though I had plenty sent in. I don't believe in keeping any of that stuff about, so I allus wolfed it as soon as the screw gev it to me. Directly after locking up, when I'd just had time to get into bed, my door was opened and two screws and a principal comes in.

"'Git up,' sez the principal.

"I knowed what was up in a minute, but I was on velvet meself, 'cos I knowed as they'd find nothin' in my place or on me.

"'Take off your shirt,' sez the screw; an' I took it off an' stood there shivering as naked as I was born.

"They turned me shirt inside out, and went over me as I stood there naked, as if they expected to find that I'd got pockets in my skin.

"Then they took my other clothes and turned them inside out, searched the seams, an' all that kind of thing. After they had done this, they pitched all my clothes on to the landing outside the cell and told me to go out and put 'em on.

"While I was outside they turned over my cell. One o' the screws ripped up my mattress and turned out all the fibre, while the other two went over the whole cell, as they thought, but didn't find nothin'.

"'I carn't make it out,' sez that screw wi' the nose as is on probation for principal. 'The whole place stinks of tobacco.'

"'Yus, sir,' sez I, 'it's them blokes in the work'us'" (the workhouse infirmary is next door to the prison). "'They smokes very strong snout, an' I leaves the ventolator open so's I can get a sniff of it.'

"'Ah!' sez the screw, 'that's it, is it? You ain't dropped it through the vent'lator I suppose? Just run round and see if it's outside,' he sez to one of the other screws. They never come back to me an' I didn't expect 'em, because I knowed as they'd find nothing outside."

"Where was it, then?" asked the man he was talking to.

"Why, I'd got a lot of fibre, you know, for wet days an' Saturday afternoons, when we don't go on the works, an' I allus hid my snout by putting a little bit in the centre of a bit of rope and twisting it up agen."

"I don't see anythin' clever about that," said

the other drily, "they must ha' been mugs not to tumble to it."

"Well, they are mugs; didn't you know that? If they wasn't mugs, they wouldn't take on a job like theirs. Why, a chap on the 'Twos' had his snout in his hand all the time they was searching him and they never found it, an' another feller had a couple o' quid in his cell that they never tumbled to, 'cause it was smeared over with wet brickdust and stood edgeways agin the wall right under their very eyes."

"Who was it gev the game away—did you hear?" asked the other.

"Nobody give it away as far as I know; it give itself away by bein' carried too far. It was all the fault of an adjectived fool that was rotten with money and wanted all sorts of things brought in. He wasn't satisfied with a bit of snout, an' a chop or steak or bit of 'am, an' a drop of port wine, but he wanted noosepapers an' cigars and fancy truck of all kinds, an' the screw took to bringin' of 'em in because there was any amount of money knockin' about. They do say that he was at the screw ter bring him in a mouth-organ, but the screw struck at that, an' told him that he barred mouth organs an' even grand pianos."

"It's allus the way," sighed the other; "when you've got a screw properly straightened there's allus somebody spoils the game by being to greedy or too careless."

"Look out, there's the Talking Fish got his lamps fixed on us," remarked the same man suddenly before the other man had time to speak, and the conversation ended.

CHAPTER XXXV

"THE TALKING FISH"

THE Talking Fish was a warder who had a watery, fish-like eye, and was very fond of hearing himself talk. He was very strict in chapel, and was always reporting men for talking or otherwise misbehaving there. He was anything but strict outside, however, and when he was in charge of the exercise his watery witticisms did much to enliven the monotony of the hour's tramp in single file with big intervals.

"Now then, eighty-four," he would call out, "don't wobble about like a paper man in a gale of wind. We shall have to send you to the knackers if you've got the staggers"; or to a man who had his cap on "at the slope" and was marching with squared shoulders: "Very pretty, seventy-two; but you ain't in the militia now, so we'll have your cap straight on your head, if you please." Or again, to two prisoners talking: "Now then, fifty-six an' fifty-seven, haven't you told one another all about her yet? If you've got

so much to say to one another, you'd better ask the governor to put you into one cell together."

"I've got my eye on you, forty-two," he shouted to me one day.

"I'm not talking, sir," I said meekly.

"No, I know you ain't; but you're looking as if you'd like to."

All this warder's remarks, except in chapel, were made in a bantering tone, which took all the sting out of them, and he was very popular generally, though he was recognized to be a very dangerous character indeed to men who happened to be anywhere in his neighbourhood in chapel.

It was The Talking Fish who gave me the only report I got in prison, and it was for reading the Bible in chapel. It appeared that there was an old prison regulation to the effect that men should not read their books in chapel except when the service was actually in progress, but this was not on the rule-card supplied to prisoners and I knew nothing about it. Moreover, I had done it regularly for months without anything being said to me.

"I shall report you," said the warder to me as I was passing out of chapel.

I smiled and thought he was joking. I hadn't

said a word to anybody since I entered the building. It is true that he had somewhat arbitrarily ordered me to close the Bible I was reading; but I had done so, and I couldn't conceive that he could possibly found any report on that.

The first intimation I had that he was in grim earnest was on the next morning, when I was prevented from going out to exercise with the men on my landing, and was kept back from chapel. While the rest of the men were in chapel I was examined by the doctor, and at ten o'clock I was brought before the deputy governor who was temporarily acting as governor. After he had heard the warder state that I was reading a book in church, and on my admitting that I was reading a foreign edition of the Bible, he "admonished" me, which meant that he was treating me just the same as he would have done if I had been reported for any offence but a very serious one; for it is an unwritten law that a prisoner is entitled to be let off with a caution from the first report against him. I pointed out that the regulation was quite unknown to me, as it was not mentioned on the "Rule" card, and that it was not a case where one's own sense of right or wrong would

be helpful; but the deputy governor refused to dismiss the charge, so I then said very respectfully that I wished to appeal against his decision if there was any appeal allowed. He got angry at this, and said: "You can see who the devil you like, but it won't make any difference."

"All right; you can see the visiting committee," said the chief warder as he pushed me out of the room.

About a month afterwards I was ushered into the presence of about a couple of dozen magistrates, and in reply to the chairman's question as to what I had to complain about, I said that I wished to complain of having been made the subject of a frivolous complaint by one of the warders.

"What was the subject of the report?" asked the chairman.

"Reading the Bible in church," I replied.

There was a stir of astonishment at this, and I felt that every eye in the room was fixed upon my face.

The chairman whispered to the governor, who handed him a large blue sheet of paper.

"But what is your grievance?" he asked, turning to me. "You were not punished."

"With all respect, sir, an 'admonition' is a

punishment, because it disposes of the only chance I am supposed to get, and I should be punished in earnest if I were reported again for the most trivial infraction of the rules."

"But what do you wish us to do?" asked the chairman.

"I wish you to order that the entry against me shall be expunged," I said.

"The Home Secretary alone could do that," replied the chairman, "and you may petition him to that effect if you like. I do not think that we have the power to do anything at all for you."

"I will undertake that the entry shall not be counted against him," said the governor; "there seems to have been some misunderstanding."

"Will that satisfy you?" asked the chairman.

"Quite," I replied. "I have every confidence that the governor will treat me fairly, and I do not think that it would have been necessary to trouble you at all if he had been here at the time."

Then the deputy governor got up as I was being hustled out, to explain that it was not he but his predecessor who had admonished me.

It was all a regular storm in a teacup; but I felt very bad about it at the time, and if the governor had not caved in gracefully I would

certainly have kicked up as much dust over the affair as my heels were capable of raising

I don't imagine that I should have got much change out of petitioning the Home Secretary, for some thousands of petitions are addressed to him every year by prisoners, and I never heard of one that elicited any other than the stereotyped reply that "there do not appear to be any grounds for granting the prisoner's request."

Every prisoner has the right to petition the Home Secretary whenever he likes, in reason, and this acts as a valuable safety valve, for when in the petitioning stage of his imprisonment a man does not know that he might just as well petition the old woman who sells apples and oranges at Charing Cross.

CHAPTER XXXVI

LIBRARIAN

WHEN I had six months still to serve before my release the schoolmaster came to my cell one day and asked me if I would like to be appointed librarian. There was nothing I would have liked better and I jumped at the chance, so librarian of that hall I became, and kept the job until the day of my release.

There was one drawback, and this was that there would be no more chance of viewing football and cricket matches in the summer evenings and on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons all the year round, but this was a minor consideration in face of the great privileges attached to my new job. My new cell was situate next to the library, and I was seldom in it except after supper and at meal times. All the rest of the day I was either pottering about in the library, or roaming about the hall with one or other of the two schoolmasters changing the prisoners' books.

It takes a man who has been shut up in a cell by himself for twenty-three hours of the twenty-four for a month to appreciate the value of a book to a prisoner.

Men who, when at liberty, never think of picking up a book, and seldom read even a newspaper, take full advantage of their library privileges when in prison, and are clamorous to get books with plenty of reading in them.

To the prisoner in the first stage the longed-for day when he will have reached stage two and be entitled to one book a week from the prison library seems as if it will never come. When it does at last arrive, and the creaking of the book-basket heralds the approach of the schoolmaster, expectation rises to fever heat, and the serving of the two or three prisoners immediately preceding seems to take an unconscionable time.

At last the basket is put down in front of the cell door and the schoolmaster turns the key in the lock.

"Give me your blue card," is all he says to the prisoner.

He takes the library card, selects a book from the basket, enters it, places book and card on the cell table, and closes the door. This is the usual procedure of the old-fashioned type of

schoolmaster, who generally does not consult the taste of the prisoner at all, and contents himself with seeing that the book he proposes to issue is not already noted on the card as having been issued before. My own first book was dealt out to me in this manner, and it is no exaggeration to say that I could almost have cried with disappointment when I found that it was a juvenile book of some three hundred pages of large print.

Totally unsuited as the book was to a man of my tastes and education, I could not afford to be prodigal with it. I divided it into seven portions, and successfully resisted the very strong temptation to anticipate the daily allowance. I had a hard job to get over Sunday without encroaching on the unread portion, but I resolutely set myself to continue the reading of the Bible, which had been my recreation during the previous month.

The old type of schoolmaster is, however, dying out, and is being replaced by a class of warder-schoolmasters who, if not so highly educated, are more complaisant and take some trouble to consult a prisoner's tastes. My chief, when I became librarian, was one of the best of this class. No trouble was too great for this

really good fellow to take to give a prisoner the class of book he desired. I have even known him to take the library catalogue to hypercritical prisoners so that they might make their own selection, and at any time he would allow a man to take his pick of the books in the basket.

He lightened my own imprisonment considerably before I became librarian by bringing me (they are not kept in the library of the hall, being general to the prison) books in French, German, and Italian, of which there are a fair number in this prison for the use of the numerous foreigners who find their way there. These foreign books were of a very mixed character, ranging from bound volumes of a German Sunday school magazine to Gustave Droz's "Monsieur, Madame, et Bebe," which must surely have got there by mistake.

After the second month of imprisonment a prisoner may, unless he forfeits his stage privileges by misconduct, exchange his book twice a week, except bound volumes of magazines, which have to last a week, and there are few prisoners who do not avail themselves of this privilege to the full.

The class of literature provided is somewhat

disappointing to an educated man. It consists almost entirely of sensational fiction, the favourite authors being Miss Braddon, Mrs. Henry Wood, and Besant, in the order named; and of boys' books of the Henty and Ballantyne type, with a few bound volumes of the popular magazines. The magazines in the library are "Good Words," "Leisure Hour," "Strand," "London," "Wide World" "Windsor,", "Chums," and "Boy's Own Paper," with "The Lamp" for the special use of Roman Catholics.

The most popular book in the whole prison library, the book most eagerly sought after and appealing to almost every class of prisoner, was undoubtedly the "London Magazine"; and all the magazines are much sought after, with the exception of the "Leisure Hour" and "Good Words." Most prisoners will not have the two latter magazines at any price if they can help it, under the mistaken impression that they are mainly composed of religious or semi-religious reading.

Prisoners are terribly afraid of any reading with a suggestion of religion in it. An an illustration of this, I may mention that Grant Allen's "Tents of Shem" was given to a man who was choked off by the title, and preferred to go three

days without any reading at all rather than tackle it.

"Give us something that I can read, please sir," he said pathetically to the schoolmaster on the next changing day.

"Why, what's the matter with this?" asked the astonished schoolmaster, holding up the book named.

"Oh," replied the man with disgust in his tone, "I'd rather spend my time tramping round my cell than in readin' any o' your religious books."

"But this is not religious," protested the schoolmaster; "it is a novel by Grant Allen, and a very interesting novel too."

"Oh, you don't kid me," retorted the prisoner with a leer. "I know all about Shem—read about 'm, an' 'Am and Japhet too, in the Bible when I was a nipper. Give us a Braddon."

"Miss Braddon! Miss Braddon!" is the continual cry, and the prison commissioners must be very good customers indeed to that lady's publishers.

Another prisoner kept "Ivanhoe" in his cell for four days, including a Sunday, because he "did not fancy the title."

Of solid reading and of classical novels there

is poor provision. There were only odd volumes of Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and Fenimore Cooper; "Monte Christo" was the sole representative of Dumas; and there was nothing at all by George Eliot or Meredith. There was not a single volume of Carlyle; practically no standard works of History, Biography and Travel; and the supply of poetry was limited to a few odd volumes. Such books as "Jane Eyre" and "Tom Brown's School Days," which one would expect to find in any library, were conspicuous by their absence.

I drew the schoolmaster's attention to many of these deficiencies, and things may be on a better footing now; but the state of the library in my time was just as I have written it. The magazines are "censored" before being put into circulation, and any articles that it is considered that prisoners ought not to read are cut out. The greatest sufferer in this respect is "The Wide World"; indeed, so much was cut out of the last volumes received before my discharge as to constitute a very serious mutilation. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories were excised from "The Strand" with few exceptions, and even The "Leisure Hour" and "Good Words" did not escape.

It is difficult to see any system in these mutilations, for two very objectionable articles indeed, from the prison point of view, were allowed to remain in "The London Magazine" for 1904. These articles were written by a criminal, and detailed the methods he followed in committing some crimes for which he was never brought to account, and also gave instances of criminals getting the better of detectives. Surely, if there is any reason at all in sub-editing the magazines for prison reading, these articles should have been scissored; but there they were in my time, and there they are, probably, to this day.

Some of the schoolmasters allow prisoners to put their names down for certain books. Both the schoolmasters in my hall did so; and as a consequence there was always a waiting-list for certain books. There were two copies of "Monte Christo" in our library, and the book was always engaged half a dozen deep; and, as some evidence of the number of old soldiers who find their way to prison it may be mentioned that there were always more than a dozen waiting their turn for each of the two copies of "Cassell's History of the Boer War," which seemed to be almost exclusively read by men who had served

in that campaign. The bound volumes of "The London Magazine" and "Chums" had also a waiting-list sometimes.

As librarian I had excellent opportunities of conversing with and studying the prisoners in my hall, and I availed myself to the utmost of my chances in this direction. What struck me most, I think, on our rounds with the book-basket was the few prisoners whom we caught at work when the cell doors were opened. For the most part they were in the act of walking listlessly about the cell when discovered, as if they were so excited at the prospect of getting another book to replace the one that they had probably finished a couple of days before that they could do nothing but feverishly wait for it. Another thing that obtruded itself on my notice was the weakness that most prisoners have for pretending to be what they are not. It is no uncommon thing to find the whole of the books of an educational character, which the prisoners may have possession of in addition to the ordinary library book, in the cells of men who cannot understand them and have no intention of trying to understand them. Such men have applied for the books and got them to the detriment of men who would really make proper

use of them, simply to give themselves an air of superiority. A man of this sort really "swanked" me into the belief that he was an exceptionally well-educated man. When we went round with the book-basket he would always ask for a foreign book, and I consequently took some interest in seeing that there was always a foreign book for him. The language did not seem to matter to him; he was satisfied if he could get a book in any language that wasn't English, and I got to look upon him as being a linguist of somewhat exceptional ability, though I never spoke to him in a foreign language, as the schoolmaster had forbidden me to speak to any prisoner in any language but English, unless I was required to act as interpreter, which was often the case. One day I hadn't got a foreign book that this prisoner had not already had, and I asked the schoolmaster to bring one over from the prison office, where the books common to the whole prison were kept.

"Oh give him one of those he has had already," said the schoolmaster indifferently.

This was a staggerer to me, for if there is one thing that a schoolmaster has to be careful of, it is not to give a prisoner a book which he

has already had, unless of course he specially asks for it.

"Give him one he has already had!" I gasped.

"Yes," he replied, enjoying my mystification, "he won't mind a bit."

"I'll bet he will mind," I retorted; "he doesn't seem to be one of the sort that takes oppression lying down."

"Quite right—he isn't," rejoined the schoolmaster smiling, "but he won't mind for all that. He won't know the difference, in fact, because he can't read in any language, not even English. He has these foreign books because he thinks it looks well. The picture-books that we have for prisoners who can't read are no use to him, for he has had them over and over again until he is sick at the sight of them."

CHAPTER XXXVII

"SCHOLARS"

ONE would think, seeing that compulsory education has been the rule for nearly forty years, that persons who cannot read and write are somewhat difficult to find. This is not the case in prison anyway, or it wasn't at Wormwood Scrubs in my time, for there were quite a number of men always on the picture-book list, and many others who could only read very easy books, for whom "The Children's Friend" and "The Prize," and books of the same class, were provided. It was to me a curious circumstance that nearly all these men were ashamed of their illiteracy, and took every opportunity that offered of making excuses for it.

There were no less than twelve prisoners in my hall at one time who claimed to have had a university education, and I do not think that in any one case of these twelve the claim was

well founded. There were at least a couple of *bonâ fide* ex-university men in the hall, and very likely more, but these are not reckoned in the twelve, as they never made any claim to be better educated than their fellows, and if they did things that betrayed their education they did them unobtrusively.

One of the twelve claimed to be a Bachelor of Music of Cambridge at one time, and several months afterwards I overheard him telling another prisoner that he was a Bachelor of Medicine of London. That he was neither, nor a university man of any sort, I inferred from the fact that he couldn't read a verse out of the Greek Testament he had got by special application. Inability to read a Greek Testament is not, of course, conclusive evidence against any one claiming a university degree, for many degrees can now be got without a knowledge of Greek; but the fact that a man procures a book which he is not able to read and pretends that he can read it fluently is a pretty safe indication that his pretensions to a university education are mere bounce. I wondered why the assistant-chaplain had looked so sceptical, and had forborne to ask me for particulars when, in answer to his questions as to my education, I had told

him that I had had a university training; but I knew the reason before I had been librarian long—he met so many university men in the course of this duty of fixing the degree of a prisoner's education that he accepted the statement for what it was worth and said nothing about it.

I found, too, that "journalists" were almost as plentiful as university men, and that their claims were about as well founded. I met altogether eleven "journalists" in gaol; but they all of them seemed to have no better reason for so describing themselves than some ladies of a certain class have for describing themselves as "actresses."

One particular "journalist" was serving his sixth conviction, his offence being the theft of a cash-box from a public-house where he was in service as barman. On my remarking that serving behind a bar was strange work for a journalist to turn his hand to, he told me that he had only adopted such work temporarily until a fitting journalistic job turned up. He must have often been without employment, and have been "called to the bar," on each occasion, inasmuch as the warder told me that his other five convictions were all for thefts while occupying the

position of barman. This man got through his "hard labour" very comfortably by painting the words "Post Office Notices" on the pieces of wood which may be seen holding the notices in any post-office. When he was about to be discharged he told the chaplain that he could earn a decent living by painting small pictures and selling them to the dealers, and the chaplain gave him a complete outfit to start him in this line. I have watched the papers pretty closely since my discharge to see how many of my old prison acquaintances are going back, and I have not seen, so far, that he has been practising his peculiar form of "journalism" again, so am hoping that the painting outfit has turned up trumps.

Another "journalist," who had seven previous convictions "behind" him, including two terms of penal servitude, amused us by his affected aristocratic speech and the absurd airs he put on. He used to address me as "my good man," and he would talk to the schoolmaster as if the prison officer was his menial servant. The schoolmaster was a very sensible sort of fellow, and took no notice of people like this, but we often used to laugh over them when we were in the privacy of the library. This particular man

was a "bunco steerer" or confidence trick man by profession, and the schoolmaster told me that he was very clever at the game too, though how people could be found who would be taken in by him passes my comprehension.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SEARCHES

WHEN going round with the books on one occasion, I witnessed the performance of a very clever trick by a prisoner. Men who are entitled to good conduct privileges are allowed to have their cell doors open for two hours on alternate afternoons, Saturdays and Sundays excepted, and on these occasions much is done that is not contemplated by the prison regulations. Such prisoners as have managed to make a shaving instrument, and prisoners make practicable razors out of many things, generally takes advantage of this open-door time to sharpen his " razor " on the slate lintel. On this occasion the doors on the right side of number two landing were open—when the doors on one side of a landing are open the doors on the opposite side are always kept closed—and a principal warder going along the top landing on the opposite side, and happening to look down, saw a man on the " Twos " busily engaged in the

razor-sharpening process. He quickly descended, and presently, in company with the warder on duty on the "Twos," he paid that prisoner a surprise visit in the full confidence that he would find material for a report.

They found the prisoner busily engaged in sewing his mail-bag, and at once made him strip to the buff. Having thoroughly searched his clothing after he had taken it off, they sent the prisoner on to the landing to put it on again while they turned the cell inside out, but a minute search failed to bring to light anything incriminating. The principal warder came to the conclusion that he had mistaken the cell, and told the warder accompanying him that they would search the cells on either side of it, and the warder went to the cell next door on the left to tell the prisoner to strip. The principal warder was turning away to follow him, when the prisoner whom he had just searched addressed a question to him, and he stopped to answer it. I was at the next-door cell on the right with the book-basket, and I distinctly saw the prisoner edge gradually up to the principal as he stood just outside the doorway and take something from the pocket of that officer's jacket. When we moved up to the cell to

change the prisoner's book, the principal warder and the warder who accompanied him were searching the next-door cell further on. The schoolmaster, wishing to speak to the principal warder, went into this cell, and left us with the book-basket standing at the door of the cell that had been searched.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, I inquired what had been the matter.

"Why," replied the searched man with a chuckle, "I was rubbin' a 'chiv' (knife) on the doorstep when the principal spotted me from the 'Fours.' I see him going along, and tumbled as he'd be here to see me directly, so I was going to chuck the chiv out of the vent'lator; but there was an exercise out in the yard, and the screws would have seen it, so that was no good; so I put it up my sleeve and went on with my work, trusting to luck. When the principal came in, he stood so close to me while he was asking me where was the knife he had seen me sharpening that I thought at once that I might as well shove the chiv into his pocket, an' I done it at once. I didn't expect as I should be able to get it out again, but I thought as I'd try when he was goin' away to the next cell; so just as he was turnin' away and had his side pocket just under my nose,

I arsks him if he thought as it 'ud be any good me makin' an application to the governor for a job out, and as he was tellin' me that he thought as I'd better wait a week or two, I just dipped my hook (hand) in and got it again. I never——"

What he was going to say further I don't know, as just then the schoolmaster came back and said: "I can't go away for a minute without you fellows start talking. Just stand away from one another, and keep your mouths shut. If the deputy governor or the chief warder happened to see you I should get into a nice old row."

It is surprising what risks and trouble a prisoner will take to get hold of something with which they can take the hair off their faces. The "knife" this prisoner so cleverly concealed on the principal warder's person was simply a shaped bit of tin which is lent to prisoners on Thursdays at dinner-time to cut up their meat, and the kind of shave that could be got by its aid can be easily imagined.

Some of the men have to use real knives for their work, and these have to be looked after very strictly indeed. Should one be missing, it is regarded as being a very serious matter, and the search for it is very strict. On an occasion such as this no man in the hall is allowed to

leave his cell, excepting such cleaners as are absolutely necessary to collect slops and carry the meals round, and these men are locked up again as soon as these duties are performed. The ordinary cleaning and the whole routine work of the hall is entirely suspended, the prisoners not being allowed to take in their work until the search is over, so that sometimes a whole day is spent in absolute idleness. There is no chapel and no exercise, so that these searches are a severe punishment to every one in the hall, and public opinion is very much against any man doing anything that will lead to one.

There are periodical searches by the warder in charge of the landing, usually about once a fortnight, but these are largely a matter of form. They generally took place in the afternoon, and the first intimation a prisoner had of them was when the warder, who was always accompanied by an assistant-warder, threw open the cell door and ordered the inmate to take his bedding outside the cell, and hang it on the rail. This done, the assistant-warder examined the bedding by passing his hand through each fold of the bedclothes, while the prisoner took off his coat and waistcoat and handed them to the warder, who examined them and threw them on the floor.

The prisoner then held up his arms, and the warder ran his hands over him to make sure that he had nothing concealed about him. Finally the two warders looked round the cell, flapped the ventilator, and poked an iron searcher into the warm-air grating.

The whole operation did not take more than a couple of minutes, and it was certainly not effectual in discovering anything that a prisoner took any pains to hide. I myself kept pen and ink, strictly forbidden, in my cell for many months without its ever being discovered, and used the same pen and ink every day without being once detected. My inkpot was a tailor's thimble stuck into a piece of soap cut in halves, one half being made to fit on the other so that the whole looked like a solid piece of soap, notwithstanding the fact that the thimble, full of ink, was inside. This piece of soap always stood on my shelf in the place allotted to soap, where it could be seen by anybody as soon as they entered the cell. The pen-nib occupied a recess made for it in the soap next to the inkwell. When I wanted to write, I would tie the pen-nib on to the handle of my wooden spoon, which was quite round, with a piece of thread, and set to work on the sanitary paper. When the ink-stand

wanted replenishing and I was not entitled to write a letter, I would apply to the governor for permission to write a petition to the Home Secretary, which was given as a matter of course, and then pen and ink were supplied to me and I replenished my little inkwell out of the warder's bottle. I sent, I think, fifteen petitions to the Home Secretary during my imprisonment, and in every case the moving power was my want of ink, and not any feeling that I had a grievance that wanted redressing. I wrote a novel in this way, but I was deprived of the manuscript a week or two before my discharge because I was fool enough to tell another prisoner that I had got it. This prisoner assured me solemnly that the warder did not get any information from him; but I cannot see how else he could have got it, as I told no one else. At any rate the warder came to me and asked me point blank for the manuscript, saying, handsomely enough, that he didn't want to deprive me of it, but that he would himself get into a row if it came to other ears that such a thing was in existence, and that he didn't care to run the risk. He said at first that he would give me the stuff back again on the day before I went out; but he afterwards cried off that bargain on the ground that an

order had been given out that greater strictness must be used in searching prisoners before discharge to see that they carried no letters for outside, and that the manuscript would certainly be discovered if he gave it back to me. It may be that I could have had it forwarded to me for a consideration, but I did not think of that at the time, and when I did venture to mention the subject to the warder some time afterwards, and just before my discharge, he said that he had destroyed it. I believe that it would have been a successful novel, which is not altogether tantamount to saying that it was a good one, but I have never had the heart to re-write it; indeed, I doubt if I could re-write it. Original ideas do not come so freely outside as they did in the calm atmosphere of the prison cell, and felicities of expression do not flow so easily from the pen. But although the labour was lost, I cannot say that it was wasted, for the writing of that novel provided me with many hours of happiness.

In the last few months of my imprisonment I sat as a model for one of the apostles. I forget which one it was, but I fancy that it was Saint Luke. The artist was a prisoner, and a very clever prisoner too. He painted a set of

full-length pictures of the twelve apostles for the chapel, while another artistic prisoner did a large canvas of Jerusalem or something of that sort, for an altar-piece. Painting pictures is work, of course, but I don't think that anybody would go so far as to say that it is the sort of hard labour contemplated by the prison regulations. I never knew the name of the man who did the altar-piece, so I cannot say how he has gone on since, but the man who did the apostles is now doing five years' penal servitude. As far as I could judge, he was not only an able painter but a man of commanding ability in other directions, and it is quite beyond me to find any excuse whatever for such a man embracing dishonesty as a profession. I think that there must be some sort of fascination about crime that appeals to men of a certain temperament, and that such men become criminals or at any rate remain criminals, for the sake of the sport they get by setting their wits against the wits of the police and because they enjoy being hunted.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE COMPLETE BURGLAR

THERE was a professional burglar employed as a cleaner on my landing who used to boast openly that, although he had been getting a good living "on the cross" for the past fifteen years, he was only then serving his second term of imprisonment, and that he had not been properly and squarely "copped" on either of those occasions. On my remarking to him one day that he appeared to have been exceptionally lucky, as there were not many who got off so lightly, he remarked that there were plenty of men who got off better, and that he knew one who had been living by burglary for something like twenty years without ever having seen the inside of a prison.

"How do you account for that?" I asked.

"There's only one way of accounting for it," he replied, "and that is that he works by himself, never talks about business matters to a woman,

and doesn't drink. If I had always been as careful, I shouldn't have been landed either. I got my first dose for housebreaking—six months it was—through a woman rounding on me; and this nine months that I'm doing now I got through being taken up for being drunk and disorderly, and having housebreaking tools on me when I was searched at the station."

I give this story just as it was told to me, and it must be taken with reserve; but I really do not see why a man could not carry on business as a burglar for some considerable time if he worked alone, took nothing that could be positively identified, and let no woman into his secrets. All the same, I must say that I personally do not believe for a moment that any burglar lived by burglary for twenty years and went scot free.

CHAPTER XL

THE SUICIDE

AN event happened just after my appointment as librarian that made a deep impression on me. One morning on unlocking there seemed to be something uncanny in the air; the warders seemed to open the cell doors with less clatter and bang than usual, the cleaners were more subdued than ordinary, and a general gloom seemed to take possession of everybody.

Then, at chapel, the word went round until every one there knew that in one of the first cells opened in "A" Hall that morning the inmate was discovered hanging to the iron peg that was placed in the wall for the towel to hang on. He was stiff and cold when discovered, and must have been dead for some hours. The strange thing about this suicide, the thing that impressed me more than anything else, was the fact that the man was within a short time of his release, and I pondered over the probable motives that led him to the act of self-destruction until I began

to fear that I was getting into a very morbid frame of mind myself.

It was book-changing day that day, and we started on our rounds immediately after chapel. When we got to the fatal cell, the schoolmaster, either because he had not been told or through inadvertence, pushed his key in the lock and threw the door open in the usual way. The corpse was there lying on the floor, waiting for the coroner's officer to see it, I suppose, and round its neck, cutting into the flesh, was the piece of tarred twine that had sufficed to strangle him. On the table, open at the last page just as he had finished reading it, was his library book, and the title of that library book was "To the Bitter End."

We shrank back horror-struck, the schoolmaster quickly closed the door, and we passed on; but there was none of the chaff and gossip that made book-changing days so enjoyable on that day.

Next morning I was at exercise when a number of men from outside passed across the exercise ground on their way to the hall.

"Look at the visiting committee," said the man behind me.

"Visiting committee be blowed," said the

man behind him, "that's no visiting committee. The visiting committee are gentlemen, an' nothin' like that adjectived lot. They're oney jurymen; anybody can see that."

Coroners' juries were often seen in prison, for even if a prisoner dies from natural causes an inquest has to be held on his remains, and to my eyes the gentlemen composing them looked every bit as respectable as the visiting magistrates; but that prisoner saw some subtle difference that was not apparent to me.

The immediate consequence of this suicide was that all the iron pins were removed and replaced by wooden ones fixed so loosely into the wall as to give way as soon as any weight was hung on them; but I think that there still remained plenty of ways for a prisoner to commit self-destruction if determined on it.

This was the only case of suicide that occurred in the prison, as far as I know, whilst I was there, but there were many attempts. A great many of these attempts, perhaps every one of them, were made in a half-hearted manner and ought not to be taken seriously, so it is not fair to assume that prison discipline is conducive to suicide. Indeed, if the motives that cover suicides and attempts at suicide in prisons

could be laid bare, it would be found, I think, that it is despair of the future more than discomfort in the present that is the moving cause. To any man who is not a professional criminal and has no intention of becoming one, the future must of necessity look sombre, and constant brooding on it may well beget the conviction that life is not worth living; but I have no sympathy with any man who harbours the thought of escaping the greater part of the penalty of his misdeeds in this way. The period of imprisonment is only the overture to the punishment a convicted man who does not belong to the regular criminal classes has to undergo, and I believe in a man facing the whole of the music his actions have produced and not the overture only. No matter what social position a man may occupy before his conviction, he will surely find that the actual imprisonment is but a very small part of his punishment; but the man of good social position will never finish his punishment as long as he lives, while the ex-prisoner of the working and lower-middle classes will get rid of the prison stigma in the course of years.

CHAPTER XLI

THE DOCTOR

BEFORE leaving the subject of suicide, I may say that though the idea never entered my head, the doctors at Wormwood Scrubs, like the medical officer at Brixton, seemed to think that I had a tendency that way. I gathered this much from a warder, who told me, after I became quite an old hand, that when I first entered the prison the warders had instructions to watch me very closely, and that this close watch on my actions was only relaxed after I had got into the habit of seeing the doctor two or three times every week.

I should never have had to trouble the doctor after the first time of seeing him had it not been for prison red tape; for I enjoyed very good health when I entered the prison, and got into a better physical state with every day I remained there. The fact was that in my early days in prison I found that my digestive apparatus was not strong enough to cope with the prison food,

which is the experience of most people of middle age who go to prison for the first time. I accordingly put my name down to see the doctor with the intention of asking him to give me something that would take some of the weight off my unfortunate stomach. In due course I was visited by the assistant medical officer, who does most of the work in the prison itself, the medical officer finding most of his work in the hospital, and he ordered me the treatment usually given to almost every prisoner when he applies to see the doctor for the first time, so that he shall not be unduly encouraged to see him a second time I suppose: that is to say that I got a dose of general service purgative mixture and "a day's rest in cell."

The man who invented that "day's rest in cell" was a bit of a genius. It meant that the prisoner's work was taken away from him; he was not allowed to go out to exercise, and not allowed to leave his cell at all. As all prisoners who apply to see the doctor are kept back from chapel, the unfortunate prisoner who got "a day's rest in cell" as a prescription was in for a day's severe punishment. No doubt the prescription was intended as some sort of punishment for asking to see the doctor

unnecessarily, but this was never admitted, as it would look so inhuman if it got about outside. The assistant medical officer had so much to do that he was not able to devote much time to each individual prisoner, so that it very often came about that a man who really had good reason for seeing the doctor, and did not need purgative medicine, got treated in the same way as those whose illness only existed in their imagination.

Whether I had good reason for seeing the doctor or not, as seen from the doctor's point of view, I do not know; but I thought myself that there was reason enough and I was determined not to be choked off by the "day's rest in cell" dodge.

I accordingly put down to see him again on the following day, and when he came to see me I told him good-humouredly that I was ready to put up with another "day's rest in cell" if he thought it necessary before listening to what I had to say; but that I should put down my name to see him again on the day after.

"Well, go ahead," he replied smiling; "but cut it as short as you can, for I have a lot of work to do before lunch-time."

When I explained that I couldn't digest the food very well, he said that he didn't expect that

I could or would be able to until I got used to it, and he recommended me to eat as little as possible for the time being in preference to taking drugs.

I demurred to this, and he then ordered me six rhubarb tabloids, which I found so efficacious that I put down to see him again two days afterwards when I had used them up, and asked him to give me a week's supply all in a lump.

He told me, in reply to this request, that the regulations did not permit him to give me more than two days' supply at once, and that if I wanted to continue using the tabloids I would have to see him every other day. He strongly advised me not to make a habit of taking the tabloids; but they took away all the digestive discomfort in such a thorough manner that I disregarded his advice and took them practically all the time I was in the prison.

The procedure I had to go through to get those six tabloids twice a week bordered on the ridiculous. When the cell door was opened at six o'clock in the morning the warder in charge of the landing walked from cell to cell with a slate and pencil in his hands, repeating the formula: "Any applications?" This is the time to speak if one wants to write a letter, receive

a visit, or see the governor, doctor, or chaplain. "Doctor," I would ejaculate as the warder came up.

"Righto," he would reply as he entered the number of my cell on his slate under the heading "Medical officer."

When he had gone round the whole of the cells on his landing, he would come back to mine and hang a card on the door with the word "Surgeon" on it, which was an intimation that I was not to be let out to go to chapel, or to exercise either until the doctor had seen me.

About ten or half-past the warder in charge of the ground floor, whose duty it was to go round with the doctor, would bang open my door and shout "Medical officer." When this happened, I was supposed to place my stool in the centre of the cell and stand "at attention" against the wall near the door. In another moment the assistant-surgeon, carrying a memorandum book in his hand, would bounce into the cell and ask in a curiously high-pitched voice, "What is your name?" He never failed to ask this question right up to the last time I saw him, which was on the day before my discharge, though after the first few times he must have known my name almost as well as I knew myself.

I used to give my name at first, but I gradually got into the habit of leaving the name out as a useless formality, and replying to the question by merely saying "Tabloids."

Then he would nod his head, make an entry in his book, and depart, the tabloids being brought to me by the dispenser about dinner-time.

At intervals he would remonstrate with me, and his remonstrances were always in the same terms, thus: "You know that this tabloid habit of yours is all fudge, of course. Don't you think that you have had enough of them?"

"Possibly," I would reply, "but, fudge or not, I am certain that they do me good and that I could not digest the food without them."

"All fancy," he would retort. "If you would only make up your mind to digest the food you could do it right enough. Now just try this faith cure prescription, will you?"

Just by way of humouring him I would do without the tabloids for a few days, and then the same routine would commence over again.

There was a young doctor from somewhere outside who used to deputize for the assistant-surgeon when he was away or doing the duty of the surgeon, and this medico was vastly

amused at my perseverence in the matter of these tabloids. On one occasion when he was so acting, I had no tabloids for a whole week. One day as I was going from cell to cell exchanging the prisoners' library books, I ran up against the doctor as he was going his rounds. When he saw me he started back as if astounded.

"What!" he exclaimed, "are you still alive? This is marvellous! Why, you haven't had any tabloids for a whole week. You must have some at once, or the consequences may be serious."

And he ordered me six without consulting my inclinations at all.

When he was doing duty on another occasion I was off tabloids again and he met me on the stairs.

"Don't you want any tabloids?" he asked.

I replied to the effect that I did not.

"Oh, do have some," he pleaded with mock earnestness, "I shall be so unhappy if you don't."

I have the most pleasant recollections of my dealings with prison doctors all round, even if they did regard me as a hopeless hypochondriac, which I certainly am not; but I came across several instances of other prisoners having differences of opinion with them.

One of them was a next-door neighbour of mine. He had been in prison nearly eighteen months and had never troubled the doctor the whole time. Feeling somewhat run down, he asked the assistant-surgeon one day to give him a tonic. The doctor nodded his head, which the man took as a sign that his request would be granted; but when the dispenser came round, the prisoner found that he had only been ordered the inevitable white mixture, as it was called.

"I don't want that," he protested, "my bowels are perfectly regular."

"You've got to take it, or be reported," insisted the dispenser.

The man declined to take it, and, with a view to hedging against the report that he thought was coming, he made a complaint next day to the governor. The governor directed the surgeon himself to examine the man, and the surgeon took him into the hospital for the purpose of keeping him under observation. He was discharged from hospital in three days' time without the tonic, but was excused the white mixture.

Another prisoner scored right royally off the doctors. He was an old hand who knew all there was to know about prison life and

prisoners' "rights." There was no doubt as to his being in ill-health for he was suffering from tubercle of the lung; but tuberculous prisoners are not taken into the hospital as long as they are able to move about, and he was put into the prison proper.

This man told the assistant-surgeon point blank that a man in his condition ought to be taken into hospital under the prison regulations, but the assistant-surgeon refused to see things in that light.

Then the prisoner appealed to the surgeon, who also disagreed with him.

Next he tried to enlist the sympathy of the governor, but didn't succeed.

Finally he appealed to the visiting magistrates and won a modified victory, for it was ordered that he should do the remainder of his imprisonment in alternate periods of six weeks in the hospital, and six weeks in the prison proper.

CHAPTER XLII

THE CANTANKEROUS

THIS man was a most cantankerous fellow, and got his own way in almost everything by dint of perseverance. He fell foul of the schoolmaster because he could not get just exactly what books he wanted at the time he wanted them. When he complained to the chaplain, and the chaplain decided that he had nothing to complain of, he sought to bring the padre to his senses by threatening to turn Roman Catholic. Even this dreadful alternative didn't make the chaplain admit that the schoolmaster was in the wrong, so the prisoner gave him up as a bad job, and appealed to the governor.

But the governor was even more unsympathetic than the chaplain had been, and the man asked that all his books might be taken away, as those books that were issued to him were no use, and if he could not get some that were useful to him he would have none at all.

The governor said that he would have to keep his Bible, his prayer-book, his hymn-book, and his "Narrow Way," a manual of devotion issued to all prisoners; but that his educational books and his library book could be given in if he did not want them.

We accordingly took them away and left him without any reading matter at all, except what he could find in his devotional books; but that didn't satisfy him, and he complained to the inspector of prisons that he could get nothing to read.

The inspector ordered his educational and his library books to be given back to him on the old conditions; but the man still sulked and would not make a choice from a number of books offered to him, saying that none of them suited him.

Then he appealed to the visiting committee and the committee ordered that the schoolmaster should wait on him with the library catalogue and give him any book he chose, provided that it was in the library available for issue, and that, if it was not in the library at the time, it was to be reserved for him when it came in.

That is the way they pamper cantankerous prisoners in our gaols, and it is in striking

contrast with the manner in which poor but honest men are treated in our workhouses.

There was another troublesome prisoner on my landing at one time, whose speciality was making complaints about his food. By dint of long practice or a natural gift he could estimate the weight of anything to a nicety, and for some time no meal hour went by without his making a formal complaint that his bread, or his potatoes, or something else was short of quantity. He was never caught out in making a groundless complaint, though the deficiency was never anything that mattered, so he could not be punished, and the only thing to do to stop him was to have his meals specially weighed and measured before they were handed in to him. Then he started on the cooking, and gave so much trouble over this, still without giving the warders any hold over him, that at last his meals were not only specially weighed, but they were specially selected so as to leave him no possible grounds of complaint, and he thus became the best-fed man on prison diet.

He had to mind his p's and q's all the time, of course, for there wasn't a warder in the prison who wouldn't have taken any opportunity he gave for a report; but he was a wily character, and they never got a fair chance at him.

CHAPTER XLIII

CHRISTMAS DAY

I ONLY spent one Christmas Day in gaol, but it was the most memorable Christmas Day I ever spent in my life, though I have passed that season in many queer circumstances. On Christmas Eve I asked an old hand who was a cleaner on my landing if any difference was made in the food on Christmas Day.

"Do they make any difference at Christmas?" he repeated in a surprised tone. "Why, of course they do. They gives you roast beef, plum duff, an' a pint o' beer for dinner, an' haddicks for tea."

That night as I lay tucked up in my comfortable prison bed, I dreamed of roast beef, plum pudding, and—shall I admit it?—particularly of that pint of beer.

There was no joyous ring in the prison bell, when, at seven o'clock on Christmas morning, it clanged out its summons to its slaves to leave their beds; nor was there any Christmas

kindness in the warder's tones when, a few minutes afterwards, my cell door was banged open and the command, "Slops out, and shut your door" was hurled at me.

Immediately after the last of the eighty odd cell doors on the landing had been opened for the slops to be put out, the clanking of cans that always heralds the approach of breakfast was heard, and although the cleaner had not told me that there would be any change in the menu of the morning meal, I hoped for the best, and weighed up the chances for ham and eggs, plain bacon, or bloaters; but though I put my nose to the crack at the bottom of the door, I could detect no unusual odour.

Alas! the prison commissioners had not carried their liberality to the extent of providing a Christmas breakfast, and the only difference between the pint of porridge on this morning as compared with other mornings was that it was only half-cooked and quite uneatable. I consoled myself with the reflection that it did not really matter, as I was down to receive Holy Communion, and sufficient time was not allowed to eat a breakfast even if I had one, as five minutes after the food was put in my cell I was called out of it to go to chapel.

There were only three communicants in my hall out of its three hundred odd inhabitants, and not many more from the other "hard case" halls, as there were only sixty-nine communicants in the prison altogether, and fifty odd of these came from "B" Hall, where the "Debtors," the "Second Division" men, and the "Star" class were located.

In addition to these sixty-nine prisoners there partook of the celebration one warder, the assistant medical officer, the two daughters of the chaplain, and three other ladies, who by their dress seemed to be warders' wives.

Although the communion service was shortened by being commenced at the exhortation, it lasted until it was time for the regular chapel service to commence, so we prisoners remained in the chapel instead of being taken back to our cells.

There was a distinct Christmassy flavour about the ensuing service, the chapel being tastefully decorated and the hymns being all well-known carols. When sermon-time came the dear old chaplain, than whom I am convinced no better or more earnest member of his cloth exists, sympathetically said that it would be a mockery to wish us a Merry Christmas, but that as far as in him lay he would try and carry our

minds away from our painful surroundings during the time we were with him, and, instead of giving us a sermon, he would sing to us. He could sing, too, and his performance was followed by hearty applause in the shape of a shuffling of feet that was opposed to all official ideas of decorum. The warders were immediately on the alert to catch the offenders; but every face wore an intensely devotional look and was turned straight to the front so that they did not bag any one; perhaps, indeed, they didn't particularly wish to.

"That noise is very unseemly," said the chaplain deprecatingly, holding up his hand. "If I am to sing to you again it must be on the distinct understanding that what you no doubt mean as kindly encouragement only distresses me. Please do not do so again."

Then he sang again, and this time when he had finished not a sound broke the stillness left when his voice died away. I do not think that there was a single man in that chapel who had not a distinct feeling of respect for the chaplain, and there were many of us, I am sure, who regarded him with something approaching to real affection. If every prison chaplain were built upon the same model men might be reformed

in prison, for more than one old offender has confided to me that what he dreaded most on returning to prison was to see the distress of this good old man. Speaking for myself, I can say truthfully that the fear of meeting him again as prisoner would be likely to keep me out of prison if nothing else would.

We were marched straight from the chapel to the exercise yard, but the usual hour in the open air was abridged to a quarter or at most twenty minutes. Then we were rushed back to our cells and left to fill in the hour that yet remained till dinner-time as best we could. I had nothing light to read, my library book having been finished the day before, and the thoughts of the dinner in store made me too restless to concentrate my mind on study.

At last the welcome shout "Cleaners" came up from below, being the signal for the orderlies to parade downstairs to be marched to the cookhouse for the dinners, and ten minutes afterwards the sound of the dinner-trays being carried upstairs announced that there was not much longer to wait.

Presently the opening and shutting of the cell doors gave the information that the distribution had begun, but it seemed to be an age

before the sound got to be so near as to indicate that the distributors were approaching my end. At last, by peering through the pinhole in the lid of the observation window of my cell I could see that they were right opposite to me, and that there were thus only eleven more cells for them to serve before my turn came.

What a time they were to be sure! It seemed as if they were taking three times as long to distribute the dinners to-day; but then that was to be expected, I thought, because of the extra quantity to be handed in.

After an unconscionable time there was the welcome sound of a basket creaking as it was pressed against the wall, and my door being thrown open, a warder took a six-ounce loaf from the basket and, throwing it on the table, moved on to the next cell, leaving my door open. Two prisoners carrying a great wooden tray now came along, followed by a warder who, when he reached my door, took one of the dinner-tins off the tray and banged it on my table. So far there was nothing out of the ordinary course, but the warder made a remark as he put the tin in that was a great departure from rule.

"Roast beef course," he said jocosely: "beer

and duff to follow." Then he banged the door to, and left me to my long-anticipated enjoyment.

The top tin only disclosed potatoes in their jackets as usual, and I felt somewhat disappointed that a half-formed hope that we would have baked potatoes was not realized.

I took the top tin out of the other with the keenest anticipation and recoiled under the greatest disappointment I remember: the tin only contained the usual dinner set down in the dietary for that day of the week, and the cleaner stood revealed as a heartless, cold-blooded liar, who had practised upon my credulity and let the warder into the secret of the cruel joke.

Truth compels me to say that my chagrin was so bitter as to cause me actually to sink down on my stool, hide my head on my arms and blubber. My hunger, however, soon reminded me that there was something to eat, if not what I had expected, and I dolefully, but at the same time with relish, gobbled up the miserable dinner even to the skins of the potatoes.

Now ensued another wretched hour which I spent ranging round my cell like a tiger in a cage. At half-past one the prison bell rang again, and we were marshalled into chapel again for the evening service.

On the way there the diabolical cleaner whispered to me, "'Ow did ye like your dinner? They do ye well in stir on Christmas Day, don't they?"

When we got into chapel, he took advantage of one of the warders not having seated himself to ask genially "if I had ever been to evening service before the mornin' pubs were shut afore?" but I only gave him the frozen face.

The afternoon, or evening, service consisted of a service of song in which the chaplain took the solo parts and the choir did the rest, the congregation having nothing to do but listen. It was over all too soon, and then back again we went to our dreary cells to tramp aimlessly round until supper-time, which on this day was at half-past three.

Having disposed of the pint of greasy cocoa and the half-pound loaf that formed the supper, I made my bed down, and got into it at about four o'clock to sleep off the remainder of the most wretched and dispiriting Christmas Day I ever spent.

CHAPTER XLIV

NEARING THE END

WHEN I was within about six weeks of my discharge, a warder came to fetch me one morning, and took me over to the waiting-room adjoining the room where the visiting magistrates met. He there took my finger-prints again; but there was not the scrupulous care exercised over the operation that was the case at Brixton, though I suppose the result was good enough for all practical purposes.

Then, a week after this, I was taken over to the reception-ward in company with a fairly numerous lot of other prisoners, and our own clothes were handed out to us.

Mine were just bundled up as they were when I entered the prison, and when, in obedience to orders, I had put them on, I was rather glad that there was no looking-glass handy, for I must have looked a startling object, and if I had caught a glimpse of myself it would probably have

destroyed what rags of self-esteem I had left. Then we went one by one into a room where there was a man with a camera, who took two photographs of each man—one full face with the hands crossed on the breast, and the other side face.

A few days after this my number was called out whilst I was at exercise by a principal warder who told me to "Lead on."

"What's the matter now, sir?" I asked.

"Oh, nothing much" was the reply. "You'll know all about it directly."

It was nothing much, but I couldn't make out the meaning of it at all. I was ushered into the presence of the deputy governor who merely looked at me and said, "That will do."

In the course of the morning I asked an old hand, who explained the mystery by telling me that the "deputy" was simply comparing my face with the photographs—a thing he was obliged to do by the regulations. I am rather at a loss to estimate the value of that photograph to the authorities, because I am certain that between myself as I appeared when it was taken and my appearance after I had been discharged from prison for a month or two there was no sort of resemblance whatever.

I was entitled to a visit about a fortnight before my discharge was due, and I gave the friend who came to see me instructions to send me in a complete rig-out, so that I might emerge presenting some sort of respectable appearance. A day or two after this I happened to mention what I had done to a warder, who informed me that it would be necessary for me to get special permission from the governor or the things would not be received, or, if received, would not be given to me until I was actually going out of the prison gate, so that I would have to go out in the disreputable outfit I had had my photo taken in.

I accordingly put my name down to see the governor next morning, and he readily gave me the required permission.

"I cannot give you permission to write a special letter telling your friends to send them though," he said, "so that if you are not entitled to write a letter, I am afraid that you will have to do without the clothes."

"What do you want clothes sent in for anyway?" interrupted the chief warder. "Your own clothes can be brushed and pressed for you."

I said that I was afraid that would not do,

and that I had already asked a friend to send the clothes in.

"Well, you had no business to," snapped the chief warder, "and it would serve you right if the clothes were not taken in."

"I am entirely in your hands, sir," I said, ignoring the chief warder and turning to the governor. "I really took your permission for granted."

"That's all right," replied the governor good-humouredly. "I'll mark the application as granted, and you shall have your clothes in time to put them on before you go out."

At last the day before my discharge came. My sentence required that I should serve the following day in prison; but prisoners are always discharged at seven o'clock in the morning of the last day of their imprisonment, and I would have my breakfast on the following morning in freedom.

I had a farewell interview with the governor, who was kind enough to tell me that I had been a model prisoner; then, in the dinner-time, the chaplain came to my cell and asked me if he could assist me in any way. I replied to the effect that I did not require any assistance, but that I believed that he had already assisted

me more than either he or I knew at that moment, and that I was deeply grateful to him.

"Well, good-bye and good luck to you," he said, holding out his hand. "I have the feeling that this imprisonment is only an incident with you and that you will do well in spite of it. I know that I shan't see you any more—in prison at any rate."

"I don't think you will," I replied. "My stay here has done me an immense amount of good, and on the whole I have enjoyed it; but I am quite satisfied with the experience, and do not propose to repeat it."

I had also to see the doctor, who asked me if I was all right, and smilingly counselled me to drop the taking of tabloids or any other kind of drugs because I did not need anything of the sort.

"I quite agree," I said; "but I shall be in a position to choose my own food from to-morrow you know."

There still remained the two schoolmasters, who had been extraordinarily kind to me, and one or two warders to take leave of; but I had no opportunity of doing so because, owing to the crowded state of the prison, and the fact of the Old Bailey Sessions being on, my cell was

required for fresh guests expected that evening; so I was bundled out of it at a moment's notice in the afternoon, and put with a dozen other men of all sorts who were to go out also next morning to pass my last night in the storeroom of another hall, where we were provided with mattresses and told to camp down on the floor.

CHAPTER XLV

RELEASE

THERE wasn't much sleep in that storeroom that night, and I learnt enough from the conversation of the men who shared the room with me to make a very interesting book. It was very instructive as to the reforming power of prisons to listen to these men who were going out into the world again, for there was not one of them who spoke of getting work. Work did not appear to have any place in their thoughts at all, and the word was never mentioned, only in the criminal sense of stealing or swindling.

Morning came at last, and as soon as the warders entered the hall to commence the day's work we were let out and taken over to the reception-ward, where our clothes were given to us; we were searched for the last time, and then, when we were dressed, taken over to the prison office, where I was given my gratuity of ten shillings, the highest amount a hard labour

prisoner can earn, and was also handed a letter that had been written to me by a friend on the day I was convicted and withheld from me until now. That letter was an expression of belief in me from a person whose good opinion I valued above the opinion of everybody, and yet it had been cruelly kept from me all the time I had been in the prison. Surely it might have been given to me as soon as I was entitled under the regulations to receive a letter.

"Where are your old clothes?" asked the chief warder.

I pointed to the prisoner to whom I had given them, who looked so very disreputable in them that I shuddered at the thought that I might have had to wear them myself.

The chief warder grunted something about my not being supposed to give my own clothes away without permission, and I took him up rather sharply.

"You are not discharged yet," he said grimly.

"No, but I shall be in a minute," I replied, "and I have so much to thank you for that I do not wish to part bad friends."

"That's all right," he said in a mollified tone. "Good-bye, and good luck to you."

Then we filed off to the front gate in company with a warder in plain clothes, who was to see us to the railway station and take our tickets for us.

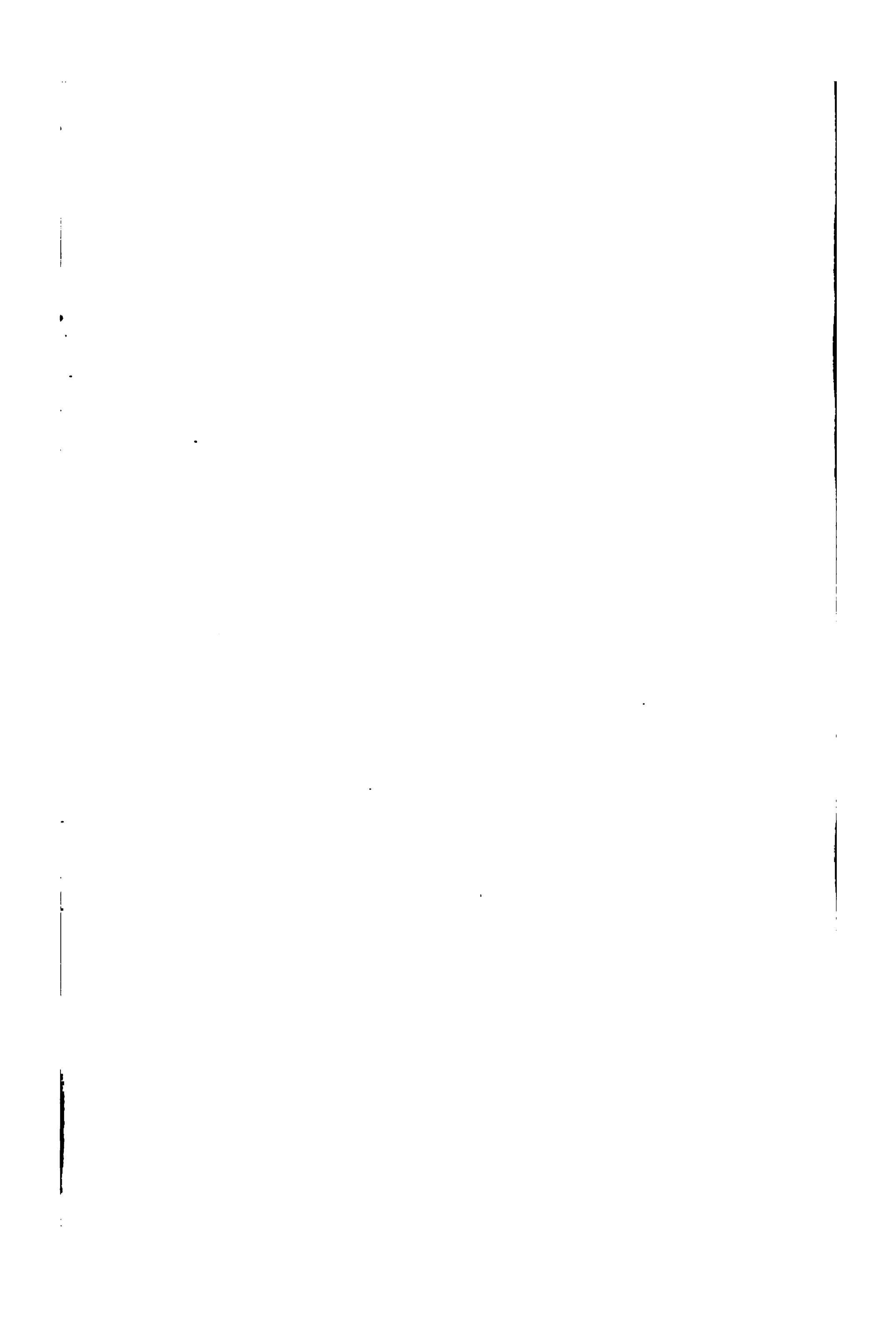
The gate-keeper let us out of the prison wicket one by one, first asking our names and comparing them with a list he had in his hand, and we found ourselves in the private road leading from the prison, free men once more.

I walked down to the station with the warder, the other men straggling along in front.

"Well, what do you think of us?" asked the officer.

"I think that you are a jolly decent lot of fellows," I replied heartily, "and the marvel to me is how it happens that such a smart, intelligent lot of chaps can be got to do the work you have to get through for the miserable pay they give you."

And that is my feeling at the present moment. If there are any persons in our prisons who do work that can honestly be described as "hard labour" it is the warders, and not the men who are sentenced to it.



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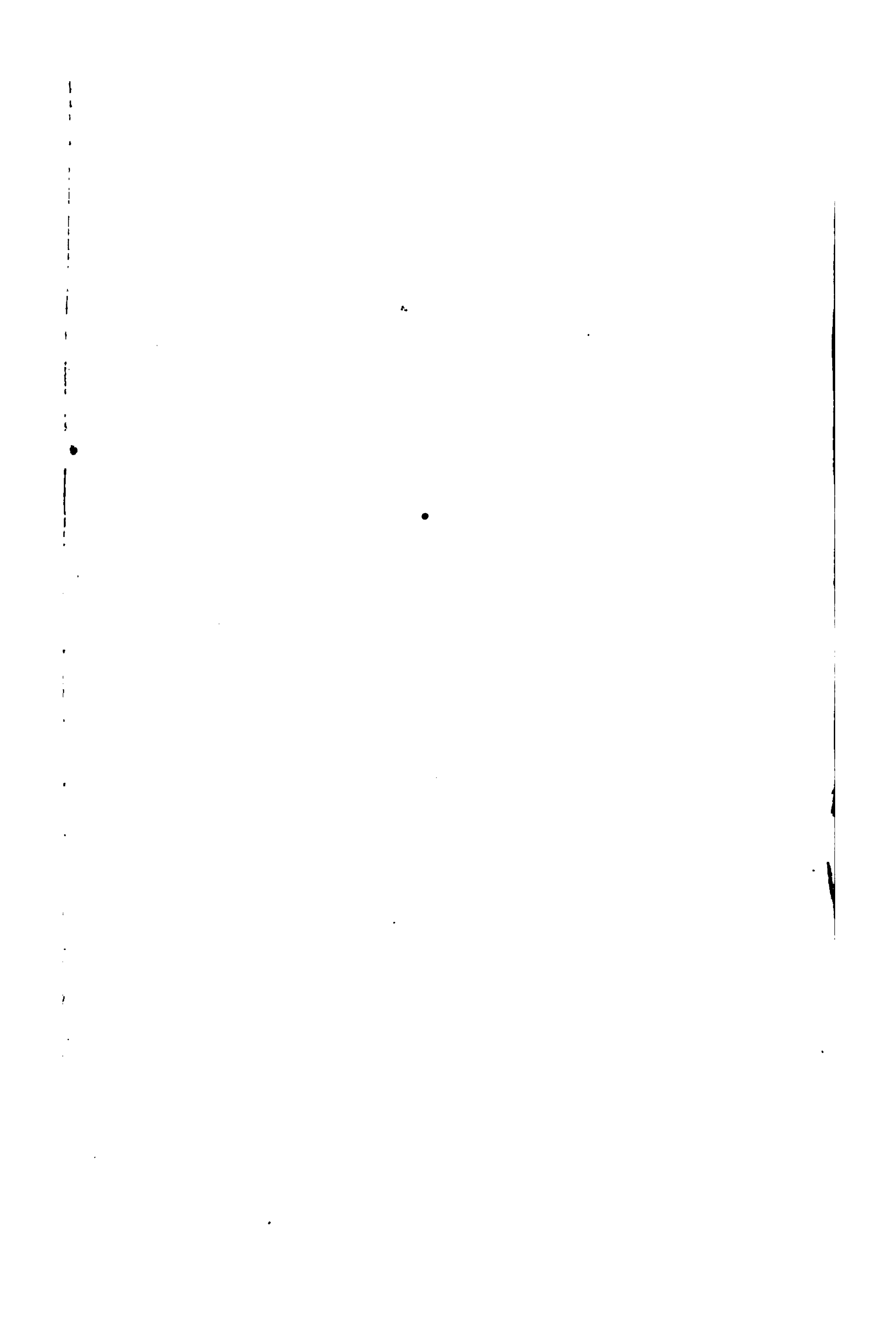

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